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also have spatial expression. Vaguer local groups, bands, or phratries group together certain clans within one moiety.

The tribe is almost a non-existent unit among these people. Its most explicit element is a dialectic unity, but even here the linguistic variation within small local groups is very highly developed. The organized tribe with the use of chiefs does not exist. The tribe is not the war-making group nor does it enforce law.

It has long been the theory of a great number of anthropological authorities that magic is an individual phenomenon, whereas religion is a social phenomenon. The Durkheim or French school of sociology has been in agreement with this general point of view, although its members differed radically from the American, English, and German schools in their interpretation of religion. Although I am in general agreement with the social interpretation of religion by Durkheim, I cannot follow him or his school in his separation of magic from religion. It is another thesis of this book that magic is also as much a "church" in the Durkheim sense as religion. A test situation is available in this region because, although the peoples of the northern area believe in magic, they have no magicians such as are found in the south. Their substitution of ordinary religious rituals reveals much about the nature of magic.

The social mechanisms which are placed in operation within the group by the spread of the knowledge that a black magician has stolen a man's soul, that is, successfully operated on a man, are presented and analyzed in the chapter on magic. When magic is believed to be functioning, all the members of the society act in a manner exactly opposite to the ordinary in their relations with the unfortunate victim. This means that instead of helping to sustain the individual and allowing him to function as a normal person, these protective devices are withdrawn and the attitude is taken that the man is "half dead" and will shortly die. The effect upon the suggestive individual, it is contended in this book, is sufficient to set up certain psycho-physiological reactions which tend to destroy him. When this individual becomes very ill, the movement of social withdrawal from him ceases, and pressure is then applied through mortuary rites which perform the function of attempting to remove him from the society of the living to that of the dead, further destroying his desire to live and frequently bringing about his ultimate death.

The sacred world of the Murngin is totemically conceived; each individual by virtue of his clan membership possesses and belongs to

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a number of totems which are grouped into hierarchies of sacred values. Several fundamental myths organize the conceptual scheme of the social life and of the outside world which surrounds it. Elaborate community rituals allow the individual by means of symbolic dances, songs, and ritual speech to participate physically in the expression of the group's conceptions of the absolute.

The primary purpose of the several chapters on myth and ritual in this book is to attempt to solve the problem of the social meanings of the symbols used in these oral and dramatic rites. The major mythologies are creation stories which tell of the lives of two sisters who lived in the days when the world was different and man and beast had an existence usually the exact opposite of their manner of life today. The dramatic episodes in the journey of these creator women from the unknown interior to the coastal plains are saturated with social meaning and social value. Within them are the ultimate clues to the problem of Murngin social logic.

Generally speaking, it will be the purpose of this book, not only to present the civilization of the Murngin in the description of the various parts of tribal life, but to attempt to discover some of the general principles which govern their social life. To do this we shall examine, particularly in the chapter on technology, their primary adaptation to their natural environment. We shall see what complete technological systems have been organized by them to make and manipulate their tools and implements and adjust themselves as men to the ordered cycle of nature with its rainy season of scarcity and its dry season of plenty. We shall then, in the chapters on local organization, kinship, age grading, and warfare, look at their social order and determine how they regulate the human relations, not only of individual to individual, but of smaller groups to larger groups, of family to clan, and clan to tribe. Finally, we shall present the Murngin religious life and see what it means and how it regulates, organizes, and integrates their behavior into that of a complete and well-organized society.

To be more technical, when we have completed our study we shall have seen the primary articulation of Murngin society with its natural environment by the agency of its technology; secondly, we shall have examined the secondary adaptation of the several tribes by which their social organization disciplines and organizes the human behavior of the individuals of the culture and their relations with one another as members of the several internal institutions of the tribe; and, finally, we shall have viewed the tertiary adaptation of the people,

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namely, their totemic rituals, myths, and absolute logics which integrate the group and relate each of the separate parts of the society and of nature into a larger and general unity. 121

The following chart presents the various parts of the society and their various relationships in a working whole.

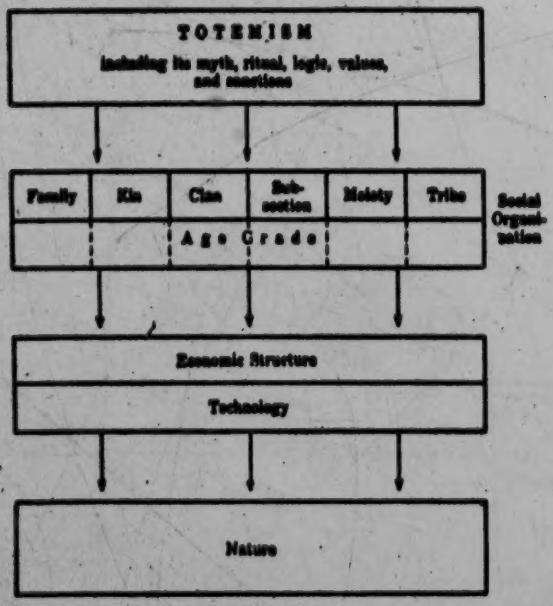

CHART I.—MURNGIN SOCIETY AS A GENERAL CONFIGURATION

Beginning at the foot of the chart, we see the arrows pointing downward from Technology to Nature to indicate the subordination of nature to man's technological adaptation. The Economic Structure is placed in the general rectangle with Technology, for it organizes and disciplines this material culture of the Murngin. In turn, the economic and technological structure is subordinate to the general social structure which is divided into its various inner segments, the chart indicating that age grading cuts across all other Murngin institutions. At the top of the chart the totemic religious structure disciplines and gives final sanctions to the social organization as related to nature through the rest of the society. A series of upward-pointing arrows might be included to symbolize the influence directly or indirectly of the lower on the upper divisions.

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●121 It seems to the author that the important chapters of this book are those which endeavor to contribute to our theoretical understanding of social behavior. These chapters are VIII, A Sociological Interpretation of Magic; XI, An Interpretation of Murngin Totemism and of its Ritual Logics; XIII, Interpretation of Murngin Death Rituals—An Integration of Murngin Society; and the latter parts of Chapter III, where certain kinship customs are interpreted, and of Chapter IV, where the functions of the *rites de passage* in Murngin society are treated. However, it is necessary to read the descriptive parts of the book if the reader is properly to understand the interpretation. I also consider the section on Social Change in North Australia of importance, since it helps the ethnologist to untangle the relations between Australia and Southeastern Asia; but to keep the continuity of the book, I deemed it advisable to place it as the first section of the Appendix, immediately following the main text.

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can kill or cure is in the totemic well and surrounding sacred rituals and objects. They belong to the general category of "inside" or sacred. The power of magic to secure these same effects comes directly from the dead, who belong to the same "inside" category as contrasted with the "outside." The two categories are both "dal" or sacred, and both ritual and magic are channels by which this power can be correctly expressed in the world of the profane.

Section II. A Sociological Interpretation of Black and White Magic—How Magic Works

Statement of the Problem

Durkheim's "church" among the Arunta is a clan organization. Each clan celebrates its spiritual unity through the unifying concept of the totem and with such objective symbols as the totemic emblem, its rituals and myths. Magic and the magician, on the other hand, fail to become part of religion and are antithetical to it because they have no church, says Durkheim. The magician as an individual manipulates techniques, and his power is the opposite of that of the priest (or ceremonial leader), who functions as ritual leader of the group. It is the thesis of this chapter that the essential nature of magic and ritual is the same, both expressing a fundamental unity and functioning alike for the individual and for the group, at least in Murngin society.

The analysis of Murngin magic to determine its nature is divided as follows: (1) a test of the magical belief of the north, which does not possess magical "techniques," with that of the south, which does; (2) an examination of the social configuration of magic in the south by (a) seeing what part ritual plays not only in the north but in the south, and (b) examining how the individual and the society behave when magic is put into effect.

The Test of the Northern and Southern Areas

The Murngin offer an excellent opportunity to study the nature of magic in relation to the social organization and society generally, particularly in relation to religion. The northern and eastern clans lack the medicine men of the southern and western clans and depend on one of the rituals for healing. The social organization of both groups is identical, the kinship system, the moiety divisions, et cetera, being the same even to minute detail. We can thus observe what elements are found in the non-personalized magic of the north and

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121 184 how they operate in the area of the southern shamans. From this we can possibly find out what generalized elements of the culture are organized into the social personality of the medicine man. As our analysis develops, it may be possible to determine whether ritual and magic are essentially different in their fundamentals. In the north therapeutic magic is a curative ritual; the two are one. The ritual used here is that of parts of the mourning ceremony belonging to the ordinary garma variety. This curing ritual may serve as a circumcision rite if the group needs a short ceremony to circumcise a boy before the wet season starts, for otherwise they will have to wait until the next dry season, running the chance of the boy's being too big for the operation.

121 182 The society goes through a prophylactic performance at its yearly totemic ritual;[1] at the death of a member there is a prophylactic ceremony in the mourning rite for the recently dead, which, in that aspect of its expression, is as much magical as it is religious, the purposes and social forces back of it being both. If the mourning ceremony were not held the soul would linger with the living, causing sickness and possible death. The leaf ceremony in the mourning rite chases the dead soul away. The various communions exclude the soul from the group, the entire mourning ceremony forcing it out of the society and into the totemic well. The sacred cannot remain with the profane: as Durkheim has pointed out, sacredness is contagious, hence dangerous (a lingering soul might make the living ill), and the two realms must be kept separate.

The medicine man who removes the hard object injected by a malignant mokoi, or the bone injected by an outraged totemic being or another sorcerer, is doing the same thing for the society and its individuals as the mourning rite. The magician too is performing a ritual which has no validity, since he has no position or power, unless the group sanctions it. The medicine man's social personality and the sources of his power are located within the group. The white magician is but the reverse of the coin on whose other surface appears the black sorcerer. The white magician through his personal mana helps the sick individual readjust himself to his social environment.

A prerequisite of social conditioning and adjustment is a normal organism, normal not only in biological fact but also in the values of the group. The normal human being not only among the savage Murngin but in any society, according to the evaluations of the

[1] See Chapter IX, Murngin Totemism.

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group, is the "well" person. Sickness is felt by civilized man to be expectable but not normal, largely because sickness interferes with his ordinary participation in his culture. Both the savage and the civilized man consider sickness out of the ordinary, even though all organisms experience it, not only because of the lack of physical well-being but because the individual's daily social life is changed.

The effect of black magic is found only when the social personality of the victim is out of adjustment with its environment and fails to keep a satisfactory equilibrium. The victim is sick, he fails in the hunt or in fishing, he has his woman taken from him, he is wounded in a spear fight or falls from a tree, and, in general, he is not in a state of well-being. His physical energy is not sufficient to keep up the multiple activities of his social personality, he feels himself on the debit side, with his individual mana inadequate for adjustment; his social personality is dysphoric and maladjusted. Feeling the effects of black magic greatly resembles the condition of an obsessive psychotic individual in our Euro-American culture, since both the individual and his society recognize his inadequate adaptation. The extreme of this maladjustment is the person whose soul has been stolen—the ultimate in black magic. The soul, the sacred individualization of power and the epitome of the social participation of the organism, seems lost to the individual owner and is under the control of another, i. e., the human part of the man has been stolen and lost to him.

The white shaman functions as one who reestablishes the victim's social equilibrium. The society positively sanctions his actions by placing its belief in the magical and social mana under his control. The ceremonial leader in the north performs these same functions. Even here a man can be killed or made ill by magic: by black magicians, mokois, et cetera, who are outside the society, outside because magicians live to the south, and the mokois, the asocial trickster spirits, live outside the group in the jungles.

The ailing member of society in the northern area must also be cured and regain his vigor and feeling of power. There being no medicine man here, herbs are used, but the native considers them insufficient. In this area the curative technique is the well ritual—a "secret" thing caused the sickness and a sacred ritual is to remove it. The individual is placed in the well, sung over, ritually cleansed, and regarded as cured by the ceremonial leader in the clan exactly as the tribe is purified and sickness prevented by ritual, and exactly as the victim of magic is healed by the magical technique of the medicine man

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121 182 in the south and in the Murngin tribe country. In the north the ceremonial leader directs the healing ritual when the solidarity of the clan and the group is felt at its greatest strength. The whole of the social forces are focused on the individual through the totems, the totem well, and the attitudes and beliefs of the participants. The leader merely expresses, through his direction of the ritual, the social mana of the ritual in the group. This power is believed to go into the individual and remove his weakness. The leader functions here as in the Djunggwan when he directs the ritual over the python totemic emblem to sing power into it, or at the blood-letting in this same ceremony when he places the power of the python spirit in the individual and his blood, which is to be used in the circumcision ritual. It is not the leader who has this power but the ritual of his group. The power and efficacy of the ritual come from the mana of the entire group, organized into a society of clans. The leader in the north, then cures by ritual and performs those functions carried out by the medicine man in the south. His activities are organized by his clan, he represents his church in the Durkheim sense, not only as a religious ritual leader but in the functions of a magician. In both cases, however, the clan is the "church" back of him. In the south the leader's powers are divided. The well ritual may still be used, but there is also here the white magician. His social personality is little different from that of another member of the clan; he differs only inasmuch as it is recognized that he has a special power. He is sought by the afflicted, however, exactly as a ceremonial leader in the Northern area is sought by the relatives of the dead or by the parents of a boy who is to be circumcised. The relatives of a sick man send for the shaman to cure and diagnose the illness of their ailing kinsman and either to restore him to his normal participation in the group or to pronounce his death sentence. *The medicine man then helps organize and direct the community's attitude toward the sick man.* He leads community attitude and organizes the community fundamentally as does the ceremonial leader. He examines his patient, says that he will die because his soul has been stolen, and the community at once recognizes that death is near. The society then organizes itself into a group which in effect excommunicates the patient, trying to force his soul into the realm of the dead and the sacred. If the magician diagnoses the case as curable and removes the cause, he reestablishes the individual's equilibrium, making him believe he can once more participate in his usual manner in the group. He can do this because he organizes group

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attitude, since the belief in the curative power of this ritual unifies the point of view of all the members. The magician, while healing, is usually watched by a number of the near and far kinsmen. They all express great satisfaction in his removal of the sickness (the foreign object) and an affirmation of the victim's cure, as do the magician and the victim.

An Examination of the Social Configuration of Magic in the South

The Part Ritual Plays as a "Magical" Instrument in the South.— Ritual can cause sickness and death as well as prevent them. When the great ceremonies such as Gunabibi, Djungguan, Ulmark and Narras are being performed, any breaking of the tribal laws is considered exceedingly dangerous and likely to cause sickness among the totemic group. If totems are hidden within the men's camp and a fight is started, or if illegal sexual relations occur, or if in some way the clan feels its totems have been profanely treated, there is general indignation and a certain amount of fear that members will become ill.

A Narra ceremony was being celebrated by some clans of the Yiritja moiety and during the preliminary part a totem was being made when a fight broke out in the camp among some of the male members because a husband believed that his wife had been having illicit relations with another man. The owners of the totem felt not only that they and their totem had been insulted but also that they were likely to become ill from the fighting and the breaking of the tribal laws.

A shark totem was hidden by a member of the Djirin clan in a hollow tree on the edge of the men's ceremonial grounds. Some women from a distant group passed near it. The owner of the totem followed their tracks and accused their husbands of not watching their women carefully. While he stood with his clansmen back of him, all of them holding their spears in readiness for fighting, he said that it was an insult not only to him and his clan but also to his totemic emblem; that it meant sickness for him or that he might be speared in the next fight he got into.

Two men were caught in illicit sexual relations with two women not their wives while several totemic emblems were on the Narra ground. The Liagaomir clan had their great fire ranga ready for the Narra ceremony. When the leader of this clan heard what had happened he expressed great indignation. He said, "Let us take them down there to our Narra ground, those men and those women, and let us show them our ranga and then kill them. Let them see first what they have done." The women were severely beaten by everybody including their brothers and sisters. The

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CHAPTER IX

MURNGIN TOTEMISM, I

796 MURNGIN totemism consists of a ritual relation which is established
773 between members of the clans and certain species of plants and animals. This relationship is expressed in certain myths and rituals.

There are two general types of rituals, one of which is called the Wawilak Myth Cycle in this book, and the other, the Djunkgao Myth Cycle. The Wawilak Cycle includes four fundamental ceremonies, the Djungguan, Gunabibi, Ulmark, and Marndiella. (The Liaalaomir and certain Dua clan ceremonies and certain garma rituals will be treated separately, although they too seem to be related to the fundamental Wawilak myth.) The Djunkgao rituals in Murngin thought form a separate myth-ritual constellation with another fundamental myth—the Djunkgao Sisters myth—and comprise two major ceremonies, the Dua Narra and the Yiritja Narra. Other important but less elaborated myth and ritual groupings will also be tested by the method we propose following in this examination of Murngin ritual and myth.

The Wawilak Myth Cycle of ceremonies—very elaborate and usually extending over several months—is focused around the *rites de passage* of the individual.[1] The Narra ceremonies of the Djunkgao Myth Cycle are also long and elaborate but are pointed more directly toward totemic behavior as it centers around the totemic well.

Both the Wawilak and Djunkgao myth-ritual cycles are concerned primarily with the expression of the social logics (usually illogical thinking, if observed as the mental behavior of an individual) of the people as they are focused on the problem of adapting nature to man. The data demonstrating this thesis will be presented in this and the following two chapters.

121 The totemic religious behavior of the Murngin tribes is intelligible only in terms of the social organization, the relation of the technological system to society generally, and the ideas which surround the so-

[1] See Chapter IV, Age Grading.

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ciety's adjustment to the natural environment. There will be no attempt to look for the origins of totemism, but rather our effort will be to determine what the totemic system is, how it works, and finally by analysis to ascertain what meanings lie implicit in the thinking and behavior of the religious activities of these people.

The task of understanding the place of the totemic myths and rituals in Murngin society and their fundamental meanings in the thought and life of the people demands that we first determine whether there is a primary or possibly an intrinsic relation between the acted ceremony or ritual, and the myth or oral rite. If there is, and it can be demonstrated that they are but two parts of one social phenomenon in Murngin culture, then we can turn our attention to the more fundamental meanings of these sacred phenomena and their place in the general religion of the people. Our order of procedure, then, will first lead us to the question of whether the Wawilak Creator Sisters myth and certain great ceremonies of the Murngin are generically connected. The same procedure will be used for the other fundamental myths and what seem to be their ritual constellations.

It should be stated explicitly that the thesis of this chapter is that, in meaning, the Wawilak myth is fundamental to, and organically related to, a certain group of rituals found in Murngin religious thought. The dramatic rituals express the oral rites.

Generally speaking, scientific method in the social sciences should include:

A. *Gathering of data:* an objective collection of the ethnographic facts from the whole of the society and from all aspects of the culture in as complete detail as possible. (*Activity in the field.*)

B. *Classifying* as like and unlike, and "near and far," *the materials* which have been collected and which in the realm of social organization form structural parts or configurations of the society being examined. (*Activity in the laboratory, checked by renewed activity in the field.*)

C. *Propounding of final generalizations* on the basis of the simpler generalizations of B. (*Activity in the laboratory.*)

SCIENTIFIC METHOD AS APPLIED TO THE ANALYSIS OF MURNGIN TOTEMISM

A. *Gathering of Data*

As many descriptions of the various ceremonies as time and oppor-

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ganized into an analogous pattern which functions in the same manner in the general society. The differences which exist are: (1) the Djunkgao myth varies in detail and choice of manifest symbols (the totems are different, for example), and (2) the structure of the Djunkgao myth is not as well formalized and compact as is that of the Wawilak. The myth-symbols are: (1) the movements of the tides and floods; (2) the naming of animals and country; (3) the incestuous relations; and (4) the stealing of the totems.

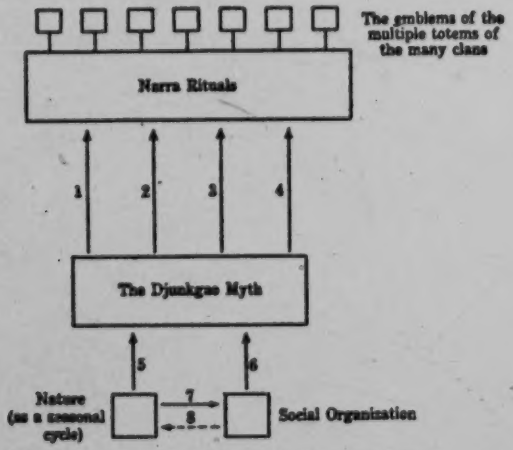

CHART XIII.—DJUNKGAO TOTEMIC LOGIC

It is now necessary, in our examination of the logical methods of the Murngin as expressed in the fundamental pattern of their totemism, further to break down the elements found within the configuration and to look at them in the light of thought processes. To do this I have had the good fortune to be supplied with the method worked out by C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards in their brilliant book, *The Meaning of Meaning*. Unless the reader is familiar with their technique of thought analysis it will be wise for him to read carefully the summary of their method in the accompanying footnote.[5]— Let us examine Chart XIV.

[5] See Ogden, C. K., and Richards, I. A., *The Meaning of Meaning* (Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1927). The authors present their analysis of logical and illogical thinking in our society and the relation of language to it. They use a triangle to illustrate their thesis: the words used in the language are placed at the left-hand basal corner and related to the idea which is being expressed by a solid line running from the base to the apex. The idea is connected with the thing referred to (referent) by a

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Chart XIV: Social Logic of Murngin Totemism

In triangle (a) the Wawilak ritual is found at the left-hand base of the triangle, the snake-swallowing-the-women symbol at the apex, and social organization at the right-hand basal corner. The line connecting the Wawilak ritual and social organization is both solid and broken. Certain ideas or meanings of the ritual, concretely expressed in song

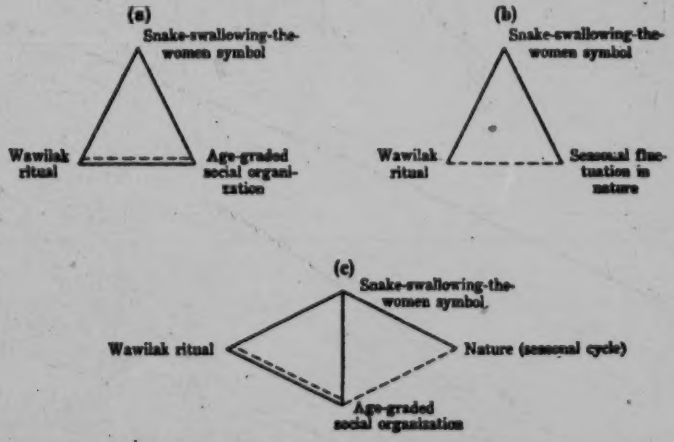

CHART XIV.—SOCIAL LOGIC OF MURNGIN TOTEMISM

and dance, relate the ritual to social organization; the meanings, however, are not to be found directly, but are expressed in the concepts of the myth. The social meanings expressed in the ritual are given symbolic form in the myth ideas.

It is felt that by manipulating the trumpet totem, one is manipulating the society (cleansing it), but the meaning of this societal cleansing can be apprehended only in the symbols and ideological relations found in the myth itself. There is also a real direct relation, inasmuch

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121 solid line running from the apex to the right-hand base of the triangle. This, according to Ogden and Richards, illustrates the method of logical thinking; the process by which the words used and the things referred to are properly connected by thought.

The thing referred to and the words used are connected by a broken line running from the two sides to form the base of the triangle. The broken line indicates that frequently an illogical direct connection is made between the word used and its referent. The authors brilliantly demonstrate that this is a phenomenon found not only among the illiterate, but quite characteristic of the greater part of our theological philosophical thought.

Bronislaw Malinowski's article on Trobriand language further elaborates the Ogden and Richards method of analysis. (See Appendix to *Meaning of Meaning*.)

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as the thing to which the ritual refers (the male group) is directly participating in the ritual. However, when the male group is thought of as the snake symbol, the rest of the triangle is necessary to explain the thought processes.

In triangle (b) the relation of the Wawilak ritual to the seasonal fluctuation of nature is expressed. The Wawilak ritual is related by a solid line to the snake-swallowing-the-women symbol, as is the symbol to the seasonal alternation. The line connecting ritual and seasonal fluctuation is broken because the Murngin's assumption that they manipulate the variations of the weather is illogical. Triangle (b) hides the basic essentials of Murngin totemic thought because it expresses only part of the symbolism and abstracts this part from its social context.

Triangle (c) expresses the whole conceptual pattern. It combines (a) and (b) and analyzes their relations. The myth-symbol of the snake and women is directly related to both social organization and the weather or nature. Although the Murngin are aware of the connections that exist between the dry season of plenitude and the high degree of social euphoria and the rainy season of want and social dysphoria, their totemic thinking is not concerned with the empirical technological realities. The line from social organization to weather is broken to indicate that the Murngin assume a direct false causal relation between the good or bad behavior of society and the state of nature. If society, it is thought, can properly care for itself in a mundane as well as in a spiritual way, the fluctuation of nature can take care of itself likewise.

Society's technological adaptation to nature with its alternation of adaptive seasonal mechanisms is expressed in the weather symbols with all the feelings and meanings which are a part of this adaptive behavior. The social organization which also undergoes considerable periodic alteration is expressed by the snake-swallowing-the-women symbols. In reality the two aspects of society are being ritualized: the social relations of man to nature and of man to man. It is man's adjustment to nature and his relations to it which are important to totemism, rather than nature as an objective reality. The totemic design symbolizes the idea of the whole group in its intra-relations, and the concept of the group and its relation to nature. The purpose of the ceremonies is to control man's relations with the changes of nature; and the effect is to subordinate, for a time at least, smaller groups to larger integrations, to prevent open conflict, and to express

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the relations of the various internal groups (clan, age grades, moieties and subsections) to each other.

The totemic emblem itself is not an absolute necessity for the expression of the two fundamental meanings of the Wawilak snake-women symbol, since the rituals themselves can express the meanings by dance and song, by the symbolic movements of the body and the use of certain sacred words; but in Murngin religion the totemic design and the totem serve as unifying symbols for the remainder and give concreteness and definiteness to the other symbolic actions of the ceremonies.

The other myth-symbols of the Wawilak ritual configuration could be analyzed in the same way as the snake-swallowing-the-women concept, as well as the Narra, since the several parts of Chart XV could be broken down into the same logical arrangements as Chart XIV.

Chart XV: Nature and Social Organization in Their Relation to Totemism

It is now possible to generalize on the whole of Murngin ritual logic and explain at least some of its meanings. Central oblong 1 of Chart XV is the Wawilak symbol of the snake swallowing the women, or the Djunkgao myth-symbols. Rectangle 2 represents the dramatic rituals which are organically related to the two myths. This rectangle has been redivided to represent the various ritual units which make up the two myth constellations. Rectangle 3 is nature as a seasonal fluctuation or reproductive cycle, et cetera, and is symbolized by the respective myths. Rectangle 4 is the total Murngin group with its age-graded clans and moieties.

The solid lines lettered A, B, and C express the direct connection between the myth-symbols and the two referents, nature and social organization. The thing that is important to notice is that in the general thought there is a syncretistic association of social organization and nature through the connection of the myth and the symbols. The Murngin logic to this point is verifiable and grounded in reality, provided one grants them their choice of symbols and realizes that thus far there is no attempt to connect the two referents; but at this point we must turn to the broken arrow *a*. The Murngin in their logic of controlling nature assume that there is a direct connection between social units and different aspects of nature, and that the control of nature lies in the proper control and treatment of social organization. Properly to control the social organization, the rituals

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must also be held which rid society of its uncleanliness. The society is disciplined by threat of what will happen to nature, the provider, if the members of the group misbehave. This brings on an identification of the social organization with nature, and they are treated as one and expressed as such in the rituals. It can be seen that if one can manip-

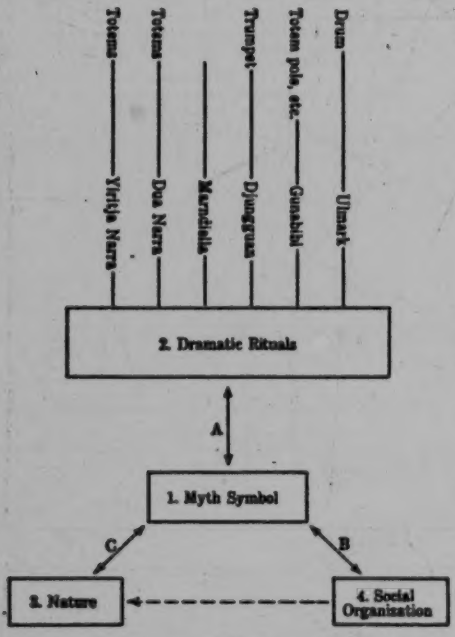

CHART XV.—NATURE AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION IN THEIR RELATION TO TOTEMISM

ulate the various totems such as the bull roarer, trumpet, and drum through the operation of the concepts of the myths, one cleanses society and by so doing forces nature to function properly. The ritual, then, from the totemic point of view, is a series of manipulations of the totem or the totemic symbols through the use of a set of symbolic actions woven into relationship by song, dance, and word expressions. The rituals relate various parts of the group to each other by use of larger symbols which incorporate smaller ones into configurations that form a unified whole.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

APPENDIX I

SOCIAL CHANGE IN NORTH AUSTRALIA

Since the historian of Murngin society must depend almost entirely on indirect induction to obtain any knowledge of this people's past, any conclusions reached are likely to be tentative and usually not specific but general in their dating and statement of relationships. The Murngin do not possess organized migration myths, although there are accounts of the movements of clan ancestors, particularly during the stress of early disasters. The writer is in whole-hearted agreement with Lowie when he says: "My position, then, towards oral tradition, may be summarized as follows: It is not based, in the first instance, on a universal negative unjustifiably derived from a necessarily limited number of instances, but on the conviction that aboriginal history is only a part of that hodgepodge of aboriginal lore which embraces primitive theories of the universe generally, and that its *a priori* claims to greater respect on our part are nil. Such claims must be established empirically, if at all; but, so far as my experience extends, the empirical facts are diametrically opposed to such claims."[1] I have therefore placed no historical value on these myths or oral traditions concerning the early movements of the Murngin's ancestors but have seen them as rationalizations. I have looked upon the movements of the clan ancestors as Murngin rationalizations, in a logic of time relations, for their present spatial relationships of antagonism and friendship for certain clans and tribes in their local organization.

The following materials and methods have been used to reconstruct Murngin history:

I. Observations of present culture change, e.g., the intrusion of certain rituals such as the Gunabibi and of certain customs such as subincision.

II. Documents of earlier explorers.

III. The culture area method, by which essentially spatial facts are given an interpretation in time. This method, combined with the evidence of archaeological finds, has been used in reconstructing the possible history of Murngin modes of disposing of the dead.

IV. The archaeological method, to determine the length of time certain articles of technology have been possessed by the Murngin.

[1] Lowie, Robert H., "Oral Tradition and History"; address of the retiring president, delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Folk-Lore Society in New York, December 27, 1916.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

121 V. Application of the Douglass tree-ring method.[2] This was attempted
127 unsuccessfully in an effort to date more exactly Malay intrusion into North Australia by examining the growth rings of the tamarind trees which were brought to the shores of the Arafura and the Gulf of Carpentaria by the Malay traders.

Observation of Certain Historical Processes

177 The Gunabibi is not found in any of the clans around Arnhem and Buckingham Bays or among the island peoples of the northeast; but large
852 numbers of the men from these districts go south to the clans that have this ceremony and participate there. Certain features of the Gunabibi are not observed by these northern visitors, particularly the exchange of wives since they do not bring their wives with them. The Gunabibi is thought of as a southern and western ceremony. Leaders from the Rainbarngo come to the Goyder River country to assist in its direction. The Liaalaomir and surrounding clans, however, have it as an organized part of their ceremonial life. The process of diffusion, as it is observable in this case, has two elements in it: (1) the clans on the edges of its distribution tend to assimilate it, and (2) the clans farther away tend to accept it in that their men go to its celebrations, which means that a large group of men are Gunabibi initiates in areas where it is not a part of the total clan behavior. Because of its distribution among the more remote northern clans and simultaneous contacts with the general distribution of the Gunabibi, this rite is diffusing very rapidly and promises to cover the whole of the Murngin area within the next few years.

The rapidity of its diffusion is aided by the operation of a cultural selective factor: the ceremony itself is but a slight variation of the Djungguan and is dependent on the same Wawilak myth for its logic. It also emphasizes with greater clarity and satisfaction the ideas of fertility latent or explicit in all the large Murngin rituals; this would tend to make it attractive and exciting to their thinking and emotions and make them see it as "more inside" (that is, the further inside the men's ceremonial grounds one goes, the more sacred the mysteries become).

177 In the Roper River area the Gunabibi is associated with subincision but
852 in the northern Murngin area it is not. Subincision is diffusing into this
304 area as a part of the general complex, but is not a ritual element; and it is treated by the people who accept it as a separate custom, although they know that it is a part of the general Gunabibi configuration in the south. It seems probable that, in no great length of time, the two will be reassociated because the subincision songs are sung at the present time in the

[2] Douglass, Andrew E., "Dating Our Prehistoric Ruins; How Growth Rings in Timbers Aid in Establishing the Relative Ages of the Ruined Pueblos of the Southwest," *Natural History*, 1921, Vol. XVI, pages 27-30.

2: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1955
OI17 Murngin OI17

"Murngin" (Wulamba) Social Organization

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IN RECENT years, the "Murngin" (Wulamba)[1] kinship system and social organization of northcentral and northeastern Arnhem Land, Northern Australia, have been the subject of much controversy and discussion among anthropologists: Warner (1930–31, 1937), followed by Lawrence and Murdock (1949), Radcliffe-Brown (1951, 1954), Lévi-Strauss (1949:216–46 *et seq.*; 1953:538–39, 543), and, recently, Leach (1951). In addition, various aspects have been discussed by Elkin (1933, 1950, 1953), Sharp (1934), Webb (1933), Berndt (1951), and Elkin, Berndt and Berndt (1950).

In this paper I do not intend to discuss this controversy, nor the Wulamba kinship system as such. These aspects will be treated in a more detailed paper to be published in the journal *Oceania*, in collaboration with Elkin. Here I will discuss specifically some significant features of this system of social organization, with particular reference to unilineal descent groups.[2]

On the whole, Radcliffe-Brown's (1951) criticism of Lawrence and Murdock's approach to Wulamba kinship was fully justified. He demonstrated that Warner's material was basically correct, while Lawrence and Murdock's argument rendered the whole system obscure and remote from real life. The material I worked through largely supports Radcliffe-Brown's contentions and agrees fundamentally with Warner's presentation. In addition, a number of further points are raised concerning structural implications, with most of which I am unable to deal here.

In the Wulamba asymmetrical system, based on marriage with a matri-cross-cousin, the matrilineal and patrilineal descent lines may be diagrammed in the manner adopted by Radcliffe-Brown (1951:46, Table III); see our Table 1.[3] Patrilineal descent is shown vertically, with patri-lines traced from the F.F., M.M.B., M.F., F.M.B., respectively. "Matrilineal" descent is shown diagonally. Five generation levels are associated with seven vertical columns. These latter go in pairs. Column L-1 (to use Radcliffe-Brown's labeling) contains persons who are related to EGO by relationships reciprocal to those in which EGO stands to those in column R-1; the reciprocal of NGADI is GOMINJAR, of GALWAL, WAGU, and so on. The same is the case with L-2 and R-2, L-3 and R-3. These vertical columns signifying patri-lines of descent can be indefinitely extended: but those shown here are the basic lines significant to the Aborigines; and there must always be an uneven number of such patri-lines. The diagonal columns signifying "matri-lines" of descent correspond, in uneven numbers, with the patri-lines. The whole pattern, transferred from the kinship system itself, rests on the principle that (e.g.) males in patri-line 0 find their spouses in the right-hand column, while females of patri-line 0 find their spouses in the left-hand column.

2: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1955
O117 Murngin O117

person's association with this line is of a "submerged" nature, and rests on the division of labor between his father and his mother which resulted in his conception. It involves acknowledgment of a maternal blood tie. 611

The MARI-GUDARA line of inheritance is from M.M.B.'s patri-line to EGO's patri-line. Just as the wives of the males of EGO's patri-line come from his m.'s patri-line, so the *mari*'s of the males of EGO's patri-line are found in his M.M.B.'s patri-line.

Now these three lines are the most important to a person: the *babaru*, *maribula*, and *gandibula* (including NGADI). They are looked upon as being connected to one another by close consanguineal ties.

The "affinal" patri-lines of importance to an EGO are the *wagubula* (containing his Sr.S. and his patri-cross-cousin) and the *gadiwalgurabula* (containing his wife's MARI, and his own MARI's wife).

IV. NATURE OF DESCENT LINE

A. *Leach's Argument.* We must now turn to the problem of the nature of this descent line. But before doing so, we must consider some remarks made by Leach (1951:24–29, 31–34, 51–53). It is his contention "that the corporate group of persons who have the decisive say in bringing about an arranged marriage is always a group of co-resident males representing, as a rule, three genealogical generations. . . ." Membership of such groups is defined by descent as well as residence. Thus his proposition is, "In a unilaterally defined descent system where a clan . . . ceases . . . to be a localized group, then, in general, it ceases to be a corporate unit for the purposes of arranging a marriage. The corporate group which does arrange a marriage is, in such circumstances, always a group of males who, beside being members of the same lineage or clan, share a common place of residence." These are local descent groups. Diagrammatic local descent groups are local lines: and the latter is distinguished from Radcliffe-Brown's descent line (1951:43). Descent lines, says Leach, have nothing to do with local grouping: the number of basic descent lines in a diagram relating to the kinship system depends upon how many different kinds of relative are recognized in the grandparents' generation. It has nothing to do with the number of local descent groups existing in the society. Failure to distinguish between these two notions has, says Leach, led to confusion. He says that "an important difference between these two is that the descent line comprises at least five generations; the local line considers three generations. . . ." 114 611 582

The problem before us is, then, to test this proposition and the usefulness of the concept "local descent group" or "local line." Leach considers that (e.g.) the type of cross-cousin marriage found among the Wulamba can usefully, for purposes of comparison, be treated as an institutional isolate. We agree with Leach's argument that the seven descent lines shown in Warner's work and by this paper are not actual segments of the total society. Lawrence and Murdock, as well as Lévi-Strauss, made this mistake and so inferred that the system was circular. We agree, then, with Radcliffe-Brown in insisting that 121

2: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1955
OI17 Murngin OI17

613 171 The point arises here as to whether corporate descent groups of a unilineal nature are common in Australia. They have not been discussed for elsewhere, and the issue remains for empirical investigation. I would suggest that they are present. Take, for example, the vague concept of horde, as a wandering food-collecting group. This consists normally of a small group of men bound together by common descent, plus their wives. Without the latter this is usually of composition similar to that of the unilineal descent group. A great deal has been written, too, of the local group: this material needs re-analysis, in light of some of the problems raised here.[8]

182 428 591 We may now consider some of the general propositions relating to the structure of the unilineal descent group, and its place in the total social system, as put forward by Fortes. These aspects, he tells us, hold for both matrilineal and patrilineal groups.

613 Forde (1947) has discussed the emergence of such descent groups. It is assumed by him, and Lowie (1921), "that unilineal descent groups are not of significance among peoples who live in small groups, depend on a rudimentary technology, and have little durable property" (Fortes 1953:24). Now this is entirely relevant to our material and assumptions, for the descent group we discuss in this paper occurs among an Aboriginal Australian people who, we may assume, conform with the stipulations laid down for the nonsignificance of this group. If we find the unilineal descent group present in this particular situation, we may assume that we will find a strongly emphasized system of transmission of property rights and type of residence after marriage. In the former case, if we consider ritual, songs, invocations, emblems, patterns, and so on as inherited from father to son, with the oblique inheritance of the MARI-GUDARA line, reinforcing patriliny; and in the latter, the importance of patrilocal residence, with its implications relating to the spirit-conception center, these might well be significant reasons for their emergence. A poorly developed technology, and the virtual absence of durable property, are surely not critical factors governing emergence or nonemergence of such groups.

613 121 114 Now I assume from Fortes' (1953:25), "the most important feature of unilineal descent groups in Africa [e.g.] . . . is their corporate organization," that he would regard a group of this kind as a lineage. But can we regard the corporate unilineal descent group discussed in this paper as a lineage? This question I have suggested in the main body of my discussion. I said that each *babaru* could be viewed as a segment, while the parallel linked *babaru*, in toto, could be viewed as an effective lineage. That is to say, we would be considering the linguistic group as the lineage, segmented into effective unilineal descent groups, each of a corporate nature. But this is not a particularly satisfactory position. The question thus arises whether perhaps we can acknowledge the existence of this corporate descent group without considering it a lineage. This, of course, would lead to a more rigid definition of a lineage, when its depth and span would have to be considered.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that for Fortes (1953:25–26) the unilineal corporate descent group is a lineage: "the way this works depends on the kind of

2: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1955
OII7 Murngin OII7

legal institutions found in the society—and this is a function of political organization." The more we consider the question of lineage structure, the less we are willing to classify the corporate descent group of Wulamba type as a lineage. There are, however, striking similarities. For example, writes Fortes (1953:26), "where the lineage is found as a corporate group all the members of a lineage are to outsiders jurally equal and represent the lineage when they exercise legal and political rights and duties in relation to society at large." Thus among the Wulamba the corporate descent group, the *babarn*, will be viewed, in toto, by different outsiders as a *maribula*, a *yadjiwalgurabula*, *wagubula*, *yandibula*, *gudarabula*, and so on, depending on what type of relative is found there. "My mother comes from there," or "My sister's son comes from there" thus those people are "my *yandibula*" or "my *wagubula*." All the people within that group will be conveniently classified as "those of my *yandibula*" and so on: all are equally classed with "my mother" or "sister's son," as the case may be, although terminological differences between certain individuals within the group are recognized. But all are held responsible for the actions of any individual within. There is thus a collective responsibility in blood vengeance and in feud, or in running the gauntlet in a *magarada* "peace ceremony." This is thus a function of the Wulamba descent group, as well as, apparently, of the lineage (p. 26).

However, an aspect which demarcates the Wulamba descent group from the lineage is the latter's presumed perpetuity in time. Fortes (p. 27) discusses its continuity, which means its perpetual structural existence—the perpetuation of defined rights, duties, offices, social tasks, and so on, vested in the lineage as a corporate unit. Among the Wulamba, as we have seen, genealogical memory is short. The greatest span of any descent line is five to six generations. But segmentation occurs at any point, so that a number of parallel descent groups are ranged to form a linguistic group, and genealogical connections between them may not always be accurately stipulated. Nevertheless, within the range of the parallel descent groups we find the perpetuation of defined rights which will be primarily of a ritual order, and relating to rights over patterns and emblems, dances, songs, myth sections, and so on; also rights to hunt a particular natural species; rights to make certain kinds of bags; and, sometimes, but rarely, specified tasks like canoe-making, or prerogatives concerning stone-ax and stone-blade quarries, deposits of ochre, and so on. This again raises some interesting questions, highly relevant to our concept of lineage and descent group alike.

It is true, too, as Fortes has mentioned (p. 29) that the descent group must be studied as a part of the total social system. He considers that the main methodological contribution to such studies has been the approach from the angle of political organization (p. 30). Whether this can be done for the Wulamba descent groups remains to be seen. Or again, that descent is fundamentally a jural concept (Radcliffe-Brown 1952): we see, says Fortes (1953:30), "its significance, as the connecting link between the external, that is political and legal, aspect of what we have called unilineal descent groups,

2: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1955
OI17 Murngin OI17

and the internal or domestic aspects." In the latter context kinship carries maximum weight; among the Wulamba there is more or less equal balance between these two features. The corporate body as such, among the Wulamba, is based on kinship.

As Fortes has pointed out (1953:31), when lineage structure is discussed it is considered "from a particular analytical angle, with the organization of jural, economic, and ritual activities." It is on this aspect that we require more detailed consideration in relation to the descent group among the Wulamba. This is the case, too, with the structure of authority mentioned by Fortes (p. 32), for a lineage as a corporate group. Each Wulamba descent group has an acknowledged head, an elder to whom all within his group look up. He, in conjunction with elders of other parallel groups forming the linguistic group, has special ritual duties and power: his authority is reinforced by ritual sanctions. It would seem, then, that a more detailed analysis of the significance of the descent group in Arnhem Land religious life would be a rewarding avenue of investigation.

In these last few paragraphs my purpose has been only to consider the corporate unilineal descent group (as found among the Wulamba) in relation to what Fortes has termed the lineage. It (i.e., the unilineal descent group) is for him the basic determinant of lineage structure. If that is so, we can legitimately mention some of his broad generalizations in relation to our concept. Further, we have not deliberately tried to show that the descent group as present in northeastern Arnhem Land social structure is, or may be, equated with a lineage. But there are points of comparison between these two separate, but similar, concepts. These aspects of compatibility we have indicated, and they are propositions for further empirical testing.

NOTES

[1] I have preferred the term used by the people themselves: they are the Wulamba, which refers collectively to all their clans; that is, they may be said to be the Wulamba bloc. The varying dialects are collectively known as Miwoldj. Warner (1937) erroneously used the term "Murngin," which is the name of only one clan and should not be used in this sense.

[2] The material presented here was obtained at Millingimbi in 1930; short periods of work had previously been spent there, in 1946 and 1947. More intensive field work was carried out in 1946–47 within the vicinity of Yirrkalla, northeastern Arnhem Land. The initial period of research was carried out under the Australian National Research Council, the latter under the Research Committee of the University of Sydney; both were under the auspices of the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney. The writer wishes to acknowledge the help and encouragement of Professor A. P. Elkin of that Department. This paper was written under a Nuffield Foundation Dominion Fellowship, in London. It was presented in part and discussed at a seminar on kinship theory at the London School of Economics.

[3] The kinship terms used in this paper are in their Anglicised equivalents: these differ in some cases from those used by Warner and Radcliffe-Brown. For instance, *marikmo* is *marimo; yupp, jobo; maraitcha, maraidja; mardkor, maralgur; butara, gudara; mali, gadi; gawal, galwal; arndi, gandi; gallo, galei; dul, dawei; natjbeatker, gadtwalgur; kamlayer, gamlaja;* etc. Terms in capitals denote males.

[4] The approximate population of Arnhem Land is 4,000; 1,200 to 2,000 possibly belonging to the Wulamba bloc.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OE17 Murngin OE17

INTRODUCTION

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY-Smithsonian Institution-Commonwealth of Australia Expedition to Arnhem Land was planned as a result of negotiations between representatives of the Australian Government and the National Geographic Society of Washington, U.S.A.

The attention of the Society's officials had been drawn to the possibilities of research in the remote parts of Australia by two coloured films on aboriginal life, 'Tjuringa' and 'Walkabout', which had been made by Mr Charles P. Mountford whilst he was leader of the 1940 and 1942 Adelaide University anthropological expeditions to Central Australia. These films attracted the attention of the Director-General of Information, who decided to send Mr Mountford on a lecture tour to the U.S.A., as part of the Australian overseas information programme.

During the tour, the largest and most enthusiastic audience was four thousand members of the National Geographic Society, in the Constitution Hall, Washington. The interest of the Research Committee of the National Geographic Society stimulated Mr Mountford to submit a proposal for a scientific research expedition to Arnhem Land. To this proposal the National Geographic Society agreed, appointed Mr Mountford as leader, and after negotiations between the Australian Minister at Washington, Sir Frederic Eggleston, and the Minister for Information, the Hon. A. A. Calwell, the Commonwealth Government offered to make Mr Mountford's services available and to provide transport for the expedition.

The original expedition party suggested by the National Geographic Society was to have been small, an American biologist from the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, and Mr Mountford, to study the various phases of aboriginal life.

This was, however, further considered by the Australian Government. Realizing that such an expedition afforded a great opportunity both to better the good relations between Australia and the United States of America, and to investigate one of the least known parts of Australia, the Minister for Information arranged for the party to be much more comprehensive, consisting of both American and Australian naturalists and ethnologists.

Arnhem Land[1] was chosen because, being an almost unknown country, there had been very little research into its natural history and ethnology; for it is a curious fact that although the Gulf of Carpentaria and Arnhem Land were the first parts of Australia to be discovered, they are still the least known parts of the Australian continent.

As early as 1606 Willem Janszoon, in the yacht *Duyfken*, had sailed down the east coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria, turning back at Cape Keerweer, without realizing he had discovered the largest unexplored land mass in the world.

1. Map, Fig. 1.

[p.viii is blank]

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OII7 Murngin OII7

INTRODUCTION

121 175 Seventeen years later Jan Carstensz, with his two ships *Pera* and *Arnhem*, sailed along the shores of Arnhem Land. It is from the name of the latter vessel that the region takes its name. In 1644, Tasman mapped part of the coastline and discovered Groote Eylandt (Large Island), on which we were to establish our first Base camp. Between 1644 and 1803, when Flinders surveyed the coastline of the Gulf of Carpentaria, no Europeans sailed in those waters.[2] And since Flinders' departure, although means of transport have improved immeasurably, Arnhem Land has remained practically unknown.

000 Since the expedition, however, the resulting publicity, its films, and what is already known about its scientific results, have increased the interest in the ethnology and the natural history of this remote part of Australia.

W. A. McLAREN
Secretary
Department of the Interior

Canberra, A.C.T.
December, 1955

2. It is possible that the *Buginese* people were an isolated group of Europeans (Dutch or Portuguese) who once visited Port Bradshaw. See p. 234.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 Oll7 Murngin Oll7

THE STORY OF THE EXPEDITION

After being entertained at vice-regal, civic and academic receptions in the capital cities, in a manner seldom accorded a scientific party, members assembled in Adelaide during the second week in March. On the morning of 18 March, all left for Darwin, over two thousand miles away, in a Royal Australian Air Force plane and well before sunset we reached our destination. The delivery of heavy equipment, which had been sent overland, delayed the party for ten days in Darwin. The naturalists, however, were fully employed, for the sea coast and jungles adjacent to the camp were particularly rich in fauna and flora.

It was planned to establish four research camps and to stay in the field from March until November, leaving before the oncoming wet season would hamper, if not prevent, our movements. Each camp would be situated in different topographical conditions, conditions which not only determined the distribution of the fauna and flora, but also influenced the aboriginal way of life.[4]

The camps were to be:

(a) Groote Eylandt. This was an island camp, with a somewhat stony hinterland and a distinctive aboriginal culture.

(b) Roper River. A fresh-water river and swamp environment and an aboriginal way of life which depends largely on river and fishing techniques.

(c) Yirrkalla. Situated on the sea coast in north-eastern Arnhem Land, with fresh-water swamps and eucalyptus forests in the rear. The culture of the aborigines has been somewhat influenced by Macassan fishermen who, until about forty years ago, regularly visited those parts.

(d) Oenpelli. On the western escarpment of the Arnhem Land plateau. This camp has a particularly wide range of topographical conditions, each with its own distinctive fauna and flora. To the east is the rugged Arnhem Land plateau, in which there are many aboriginal cave shelters. At the base are lines of fresh-water lagoons, the home of a multitude of water-birds and fish and, to the west, the widespreading floodplains of the Alligator Rivers.

By 1 April the heavy camp equipment and supplies had reached Darwin and the party was ready to move to our first camp at Groote Eylandt. However, although the Royal Australian Air Force was able to fly us to Groote Eylandt in Catalina flying-boats, it did not have planes capable of transporting our forty-seven tons of load, camp gear and scientific equipment. Providentially (at least, so it seemed at the time) the owner-skipper of a 200-ton, flat-bottomed wooden barge called the *Phoenix*, which had been commissioned to bring dismantled material to Darwin from an old flying-boat base at Groote Eylandt, offered to carry the supplies on the outward journey, promising to reach there within fourteen days of our departure.

4. Map, Fig. 1.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OI17 Murngin OI17

*532 171

serpent, spirit children and the increase of natural species. At certain seasons of the year, the aborigines repaint the *Wandjina* to ensure that rain will fall, and the spirit children will leave the body of the rainbow-serpent to become human beings.

But these *Wandjina* figures dominate the art only within a limited area. As one moves further east, particularly around Napier Broome Bay,[22] some of the caves are filled with many strange figures of human beings, which bear more than a passing resemblance to cave paintings in western Arnhem Land. Still further east again, at the headwaters of the Gregory River,[23] there are large twelve-foot figures of mythical men, also associated with rain and rain-making. Other figures in the adjacent caves are naturalistic, depicting men, women, and the animals of the country.

It is in Arnhem Land, however, that the most interesting and varied forms of aboriginal art have been found. These will be described in the following pages.

1. THE FUNCTION OF PRIMITIVE ART

*532 121

There are two schools of thought on the function of primitive art. One contends that to paint pictures is a propensity of the human mind, and that all true art, either primitive or modern, is a spontaneous activity carried out for its own sake. The other school takes the opposite view, and claims that primitive man is essentially practical; that he paints pictures, say of kangaroos, not specifically because he takes pleasure in the act, but because by so doing he gains a magical control over the creature and can thereby capture it more easily.

My research into the art of the Australian aborigines has convinced me that their art is predominantly non-magical, that is, the aborigines paint because they want to, and not for some material advantage. In a number of places in Australia, however, magic is definitely associated with some aspects of the art, e.g. among the Aranda tribes of Central Australia,[24] and some tribes of north-western Australia.[25] The same holds true of the art of Arnhem Land and especially Oenpelli where, although most of the cave art is purely representational and non-magical, there are certain cave paintings associated with malignant magic and food increase ceremonies.

A review of the evidence gathered from the examination of the cave paintings, bark paintings, ceremonial objects and body decorations of Arnhem Land, suggests that the art of this area can be roughly divided into four classes. (i) art for art's sake, in which the artist paints pictures in caves or on sheets of bark for the pleasure which he gains in so doing; (ii) sacred art, such as is seen in the decoration of the body and of the ceremonial objects;[26] (iii) magical paintings, by means of which the aborigines believe they can control nature, punish enemies, and increase the supply of the food animals;[27] and (iv) didactic bark paintings,

22. Mountford (1937), pp. 30-40.
23. Mountford (1943), p. 93.
24. p. 400.
25. Davidson (1936), p. 64.
26. Love (1930), p. 3; Elkin (1930), p. 277.
27. See Pl. 62B.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 O117 Murngin O17

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used at the initiation and age-grading ceremonies to teach the young men the myths and folk-ways of the tribe.[28]

2. ART STYLES AND DISTRIBUTION IN ARNHEM LAND[29]

532* 171

The basic art of Arnhem Land, which consists of single or multiple figures on a plain ground, covers the greater part of that area, extending from Groote Eylandt in the east, to the western edge of Arnhem Land, southward as far as the upper Roper River, where it meets the simple, abstract art of Central Australia, and northward, until it is absorbed by the more advanced art of the north-east. Pl. 20D, from Groote Eylandt, is a typical example of the basic art.

Fig. 2. Distribution of art styles in Arnhem Land

Although, on the western edge of Arnhem Land, this art still consists of single or multiple figures on a plain ground, it is modified by the curious X-ray art. In this, the internal as well as the external details of the creature are shown (Pl. 75B).

As far as we know this X-ray art occupies a limited area, extending from Goulburn Island[30] in the north, along the western edge of Arnhem Land, to possibly the Katherine River. It does not extend far east or west (Fig. 2B).

The more complex art of north-eastern Arnhem Land seems to be confined to an area extending from Blue Mud Bay, in the Gulf of Carpentaria, to Cape Stewart in the north (Fig. 2C).

28. This was the practice at Oenpelli, p. 224. Warner (1937), p. 318, describes 'a bark house . . . on the ceremonial grounds. . . . The interior walls are painted with realistic and geometric figures (which illustrate the story of the two Wawilak sisters).' Although Warner does not say so, it is likely that these bark paintings, like those the aborigines told me about at Oenpelli, were used to instruct initiates in the tribal myths.

29. Distribution Map, Fig. 2.

30. Mountford (1939a), Pl. 14-17.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 Oll7 Murngin Oll7

4

THE ART OF YIRRKALLA

114 121 531

DURING THE EIGHT weeks the expedition camped at Yirrkalla[1] my research was concentrated on bark paintings, carved animal and human figures, and their associated myths.

F. M. Setzler and F. D. McCarthy, while engaged on archaeological research at Milingimbi, collected several painted ceremonial objects from that locality. The Rev. Arthur F. Ellemor also arranged for the aborigines of Milingimbi to make a number of bark paintings for me. These objects and bark paintings from Milingimbi are valuable because they indicate little change in the art forms over north-eastern Arnhem Land. Setzler and McCarthy also assisted me in the interpretation of some of the Yirrkalla bark paintings.

When I returned to Yirrkalla for a short period during 1952 I was able to check the work of other investigators as well as my own. As the art forms of both Yirrkalla and Milingimbi are similar they will be treated as one unit from north-east Arnhem Land.

Barrett[2] figured cave paintings from the Wessel Islands, as well as fish and animals which the aboriginal children moulded in the sand. The Berndts[3] described a series of sacred carved figures from Yirrkalla and later[4] another series of secular carved figures from the same area; they[5] also published a myth of the moon and the words of the song belonging to it. Elkin and the Berndts[6] described a number of bark paintings, carved animal and human figures, and ceremonial objects. It is, however, from Warner's[7] descriptions and analyses of the culture of the aborigines of north-eastern Arnhem Land that we have learned so much about the mythology, philosophy, social organization and the clan and language groups of north-eastern Arnhem Land. Thomson[8] has described the movement of goods and the trade cycles of eastern Arnhem Land.

1. BARK PAINTINGS, DECORATED OBJECTS AND MYTHS

(1) Human Beings

The Man, Djunkgao

Among the aborigines of Arnhem Land the myths of the *Wawalik* sisters and of the *Djunkgao* form the bases of all the important ceremonies, the myth of the *Wawalik* for the *gunabibi, ulmark, djungguan* and *marndiella* rituals, and the myth of *Djunkgao* for the *dua* and *jiritja narra* rituals.[9]

773* 796

1. Map, Fig. 1.
2. Barrett and Croll (1943), p. 70.
3. Berndt (1948), pp. 309-26.
4. Berndt (1949), pp. 213-20, Pl. 1-3.
5. Berndt (1948a), pp. 17-50.
6. Elkin and the Berndts (1950).
7. Warner (1937).
8. Thomson (1949).
9. Warner (1937), p. 241.

[pp. 16-266 not processed]

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
OI17 Murngin OI17

Foreword

THE invitation of the Executive of the Laymen's Missionary Movement to deliver their Memorial Lecture for this year I regard as a very distinct honour. I also count it a great privilege to be associated with that excellent organisation in its endeavours to extend a knowledge of the missionary activities of our Church, and of the needs of the non-Christian world.

In accepting the invitation to deliver this Lecture, I am conscious of the limitations of my knowledge and ability, but undertake this important task in the hope that I may be able to make some contribution—however slight—to the solution of the problem presented by the condition of our Australian Aborigines.

121 This Lecture is not to be regarded as a scientific treatise. Matters of custom and belief are inexhaustively dealt with, and then only in so far as they serve to indicate the characteristics of aboriginal life and culture. Moreover, while aboriginal culture throughout Australia is of the one general type, there is a wide variation of detail between different districts. What is said here claims to be true in detail of East Arnhem Land only.

The ground covered by this Lecture is of necessity limited. Many phases of this aboriginal problem I have been obliged to leave untouched. Also the preparation of this Lecture has had to be accomplished amid a full round of other duties, but I trust that its many deficiencies may not altogether deprive it of value to those who are concerned about the urgent national duty of discharging our responsibilities toward this Australian Aboriginal race.

T. THEODOR WEBB.

6: Berndt E 5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

which then has to be quickened. The coastal Arnhem Landers have had centuries of contact, and it may be that the usually accepted Aboriginal doctrine of conception has been modified here. In any case, granting the premises, the form in which they hold it is eminently logical. 114 842 796

Amongst the many other interesting points raised by the author is the vital significance of dreams, particularly for ritual and its interpretation. One of Mr. Berndt's important contributions to the anthropology of northern Arnhem Land is his systematic recording of dreams—a sign of the confidence put in him by the natives, and also a sign of the objectivity with which they regard dreams. 114 123 787

One last point: Mr. Berndt lays stress on the importance of the ritual rôle played by women in this region. He is correct in doing so. Though they are not on the "Mother Place", yet they are nearby playing their part, a part which stems from the Dreamtime, when the sacred ritual was theirs; and how else could it be, for life and birth is through the womb? A cult of the Great Mother would have no foundation apart from the women through whom her children must be born. Women here have their sacred aspect and sacred rôle. 114 562 796

The Author and the Field

Mr. R. M. Berndt was well equipped for doing research into the religion of Arnhem Land. After study in the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, he with his wife (Catherine H. Berndt), also an Anthropologist, did four years of field research amongst Aborigines in both tribal and detribalized conditions. This included about eighteen months on the south-west of Arnhem Land and on the border of the Kimberley Division of Western Australia, where he was introduced to the cult. In 1946 when the Australian National Research Council was able to make a further grant to these workers, we selected the north-eastern corner of Arnhem Land as the main field. Research there would be complementary to what Dr. Warner had done eighteen years before; in addition it was an area subject to the spread of native customs and rites from both the west and the south, and was also likely to show some cultural effects arising from long contact with Macassans or others who visited the region to engage in marine industry. Finally, although a Mission had been operating at Yirrkalla for nearly ten years and an Air Force base had been established there during the war, causing some modification of native life, in particular, lessening the degree of nomadism, yet in spite of this, the fundamental drives and beliefs had not been affected. Men in the prime of life as well as the old men still belonged to the "old order". It was, therefore, still possible to study the native religion in its cultural and social setting as a functioning institution. Fortunately, I was able to assure myself of this during a visit and inquiries in the region in 1946. 114 121 [122] [797] [177]

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

PREFACE

The main purpose of this work is to indicate some fundamental features of an Australian Aboriginal religious cult, the Kunapipi, in one particular area. North-eastern Arnhem Land has been selected, not because it presents a more exotic background or more spectacular ceremonies, but because the cult as seen here is fairly well defined, and because its religious concepts are important and significant to the people concerned. In this region there are several fairly well-integrated religious cults, having a common theme and fundamental intent. Most of them, however, have complex local associations, whereas the Kunapipi ceremonies, which have been introduced into north-east Arnhem Land, belong to a configuration which is still widely diffused throughout the Northern Territory.

The plan is to examine the cult as seen in this one region, to consider its relative importance in adjacent areas, and so prepare the way for a more intensive analysis of it in the central-western part of the Northern Territory. Although introduced, the Kunapipi has become closely associated with more truly north-east Arnhem Land mythology, in particular, the Wauwalak, which is used to explain it; but the Wauwalak mythology itself was at some time diffused into north-eastern Arnhem Land, apparently from the same direction as this much later ritual.

The Kunapipi songs of Yirrkalla (in north-east Arnhem Land) have been derived from those commonly in use further south. By examining relevant songs and mythology of adjacent areas, it is possible to trace the movement and diffusion of this cult from one group to another, and to discuss (for instance) the source of the Yirrkalla Kunapipi. This is not really difficult, for the Kunapipi (in all the regions mentioned in this work) possesses the common theme of a Great Mother, expressed as either a single or a dual personality, her power being extended to her daughters, the Wauwalak, Ka'lerika'lering or Mungamunga. She is said to be responsible for the constant fertility of human beings and other natural species, and the continuing sequence of the seasons, as well as for the general similarity of her ritual, emblems and songs. In addition, certain "key" words, which are sacred, are used widely to designate ceremonies, objects and sacred beings.

What does this cult mean to its postulants? Why does it exist? What do the people themselves believe that they are receiving from it? Its basic intent seems to express the latent or conscious desires of

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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121 the individuals who combine to form the social group that carries
773 out these ceremonies. And if this be so, does the cult adequately ful-
794 fil the wishes of the people, or do they feel that something is lacking?
796 All this raises a variety of problems, of which only a few can be
771 treated here. But to understand Aboriginal religion, its belief and rites, it is essential to have thorough knowledge of the mythology and songs of at least one particular cult. It is not enough merely to observe rituals performed on the sacred ground, and then to theorize from such observations; for Aboriginal sacred ritual is an acting out of mythology, and mythology, in turn, is recorded in elaborate and detailed song cycles which enshrine the meaning and significance of the ritual. Therefore, conclusions can be reached only after an analysis of these three aspects: ritual, mythology and song. This implies that the doctrines, intent and function of a specific religious cult, such as the Kunapipi, may be derived from analysis of the mythological, historical and present-day data available to the field-worker, especially as the cult is still a functioning element in the life of the people. From these we may arrive at some general conclusions con-
121 cerning the essential nature of Australian Aboriginal religion. Such
771 conclusions, however, do not necessarily provide a basis for interpreting "primitive" religion generally, nor a peg upon which to hang theories relating to the origin of religion. Indeed, it is unwise to describe Australian Aboriginal religion by that controversial and dubious term, "primitive". Aboriginal religious concepts, like those of Europe, have been changing through the ages in association with the cultural needs of the people. In the process, Aboriginal religion has developed into a mature and vivid faith, mediated through beliefs and rites, and giving to its adherents a deep satisfaction and happiness.

121 The whole question of Australian Aboriginal religion needs far
771 more consideration than has been accorded it to date;[1] but before
794 any reliable theoretical studies can be made, it is essential that anthropological field-workers should provide considerably more data than are at present available. Here, in this volume, is a study of one religious cult. But it should be kept in mind that this work deals with only one cult in one region, with reference to its diffusion in adjacent areas; other cults exist side by side with the Kunapipi, and still others are found in various parts of Aboriginal Australia. Whether all these cults are basically similar, and have a common intent and function within the separate native cultures, or whether they are fundamentally dissimilar, has yet to be determined.

1. E.g. E. Durkheim, *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Paris, 1912; H. Hubert and M. Mauss, *Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice*, *Mélanges d'histoire des religions*, Paris, 1909; R. H. Lowie, *Primitive Religion*, New York, 1924; G. Róheim, *Australian Totemism*, London, 1925, and *Animism, Magic, and the Divine King*, New York, 1930; P. Radin, *Primitive Religion, Its Nature and Origin*, New York, 1937.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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Several aspects should perhaps be mentioned in this *Preface*, since they throw new light on the study of Aboriginal religion. 121 771 776

Throughout the greater part of the Northern Territory the concept of a Fertility Mother is found. She is the direct or indirect inspiration of all religious thought and activity. She is the central theme of the Kunapipi ceremonies. Indeed, Kunapipi is one of her sacred names. Her "eternal" presence throws new light on the philosophy of totemism in the region, for it was she, herself without a totem, who brought the totems into being. Animals, birds, reptiles, Spirits, inanimate objects, physiographic features, became totemic through her divine influence and association, or because they served some purpose in relation to her "eternal" rôle of creator, cause of birth and rebirth and seasonal fluctuations. In the Kunapipi then, the totem bears the sacred imprint of its religious or mythological connection with the Mother. In this region, therefore, the study of totemism is a means to an end: and that end, where we have any detailed knowledge, is the Mother herself, existing as a divine Being serving as an explanation of religious thought, belief and behaviour.

This leads to the realm of the sacred, but the problem of the demarcation between the sacred and the profane, and of the part played by women in sacred ritual, particularly in the Kunapipi itself, needs to be considered far more intensively than is possible here.

Religious thought and action permeate the whole of an indigenous society, and are not manifested only on the sacred ceremonial ground when groups meet for the performance of ritual. Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to separate the sacred from the profane. A man or woman does not receive sacred power directly or indirectly from the Sacred Mother only on the ceremonial ground, through the performance of ritual. He, or shé, possesses innately a sacred or divine essence, which exists apart from any external coercion: whatever his or her degree of participation in the sacred collective rites, this personal germ of sacredness remains intact, and cannot be destroyed even by death. It seems probable however that this individual germ, which may perhaps be described as a person's own sacred aura, may be intensified on the occasion of religious ceremonies. The spirit of a man (or woman) is derived directly from the Sacred Mother; his bones themselves are possessed of a sacred quality, being likened to the *rangga* emblems associated with the great ancestral Beings; and he himself bears "inside" (sacred) and "outside" (secular) personal names, which are in many cases of sacred origin. 121 771 778 774

Women have a far greater part to play in sacred religious ceremonies than has hitherto been observed. This is particularly the case in north-eastern Arnhem Land; and in the performance of the Kunapipi they are directly responsible for the efficacy of a whole series of ceremonies. Because they do not take part in all the rituals of a particular cult, this does not mean that they are excluded or are 121 562 771 796

consequently irreligious. Woman, or more precisely her unique ability to create, together with man's power to inseminate, has become a feature of native religion in these areas, crystallized in the concept of the Mother, whom we see manifested in (for instance) the Kunapipi. The aura thus surrounding, and radiating from, this Fertility Mother has been extended in some degree to native women to-day.

Another problem arising from the study of the Kunapipi cult which needs detailed consideration, is that of individual origins. Throughout the greater part of the Territory, specific cults have been inspired either by one or, in some cases, by two or three Ancestral Beings. Through their own personality and power, it is said, they succeeded in indoctrinating the whole social group in which they found themselves. They brought with them what appear to have been new ideologies, with attendant ritual, emblems, songs, and mythology in which they themselves now play a dominant part. This individual aspect is apparent in the case of the Kunapipi Mother, who arose from the waters of the Roper River Mouth (*vide* Chapter XI), bringing with her the main features of what we now call the Kunapipi cult. The same principle is evident in the appearance of the Djanggawul (*vide* Chapter I) and of Laintjung (Chapter I) in north-eastern Arnhem Land; both these Beings appear to have inspired virile cults, substantiated by mythology which details their adventures, their activities and beliefs. The society itself, of course, must have been more or less receptive to the introduction of these religious beliefs. That is to say, the religious leader, whether Kunapipi, Laintjung or the Djanggawul Brother or Sisters, was able to impress his (or her) own point of view on that society, which in turn was willing to adopt his views and ideas, so giving social impetus to the introduced religion.

This aspect of individual origins, in relation to specific Australian Aboriginal cults, is an important one. The contention, which may be substantiated by mythology and the traditional song-cycles, is that a powerful personality—such as the Great Mother, the acknowledged spiritual leader and inspiration of the Kunapipi cult—possessed of ability beyond the ordinary, can and does exert his or her influence on the society in which he is either temporarily or permanently living; and that influence, helped by favourable circumstances, is sufficient to establish a cult which attracts adherents, and becomes in its own right an important social function and institution.

The migration of Ancestral Beings, like Kunapipi and others, into a particular society, bringing with them a religious cult, is a fairly general phenomenon in Aboriginal religious life. Major Ancestral Beings very rarely arise in the country of the people with whom they are mythologically associated, or in the society which serves as the "incubator" for their specific ideology. Rather, the individual (in

the guise of an Ancestral Being) is the proselytizer, the carrier of the germ of a religious idea, which is adopted by, and modified to suit, the social group in which he finds himself. Whether he brought with him the ingredients of that religion from his own "home", or whether it took shape in consequence of his contact with the alien people, is a matter for conjecture.

The diffusion of Aboriginal religious cults, such as the Kunapipi, also presents some interesting features. A certain amount of more or less "pure" evangelization has occurred in this respect; individual cult leaders, of both historic and contemporary society, have been interested in furthering the activities of the cult. But in their successful and unsuccessful attempts to introduce their particular beliefs into other groups, they take only the basis of their cult life, and do not as a rule attempt to superimpose their own cultural ideas and organization. In north-eastern Arnhem Land, for example, the Kunapipi, recognized by natives themselves as an introduced theme, has been fairly well integrated with existing social organization, religious life, and secular beliefs; even its mythology has been altered to meet the demands of local ethics, while the alien songs are interpreted in the light of indigenous criteria. Nevertheless, the basic ideology and construction of the Kunapipi cult remain: and it is this aspect which really concerns the proselytizer. The same process may be observed in other regions, such as western Arnhem Land, the Daly River-Port Keats area, and west-central Northern Territory.

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A word should be said concerning the presentation of Kunapipi Song Cycles (that is, in Chapters VII, VIII, X, and XI). Their value lies in their substantiation of the cult's doctrine, explaining its outward expression in ritual and in the use of ceremonial emblems and objects. Such traditional songs ensure that the original intent of the cult is not lost or radically misinterpreted. To-day, however, misinterpretation is possible as a result of conflicting loyalties arising from the contact of Aboriginal with European culture. In order to restrict ourselves to the literal interpretation of these songs, it has been found necessary to present them with an interlinear translation, a general rendering, and a brief commentary based on native interpretation: this method makes available the maximum amount of data. The phonetic script used conforms to that of the International Phonetic Association,[2] amended for use in Australia by Dr. A. Capell.[3]

2. G. Noel-Armfield, *General Phonetics*, 1931, pp. 21-23. *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, "A Preliminary Report of Field-Work in the Ooldea Region, Western South Australia", *Oceania Bound Reprint*, Sydney, 1945, pp. 262-264, or *Oceania*, Vol. XV, No. 1, pp. 50-52.
3. A. Capell, *Methods and Materials for Recording Australian Languages*, Sydney, 1945 (reprinted from *Oceania*, Vol. XVI, No. 2, pp. 144-176). Since the complete phonetic script was not available for rendering native words in this volume, some equivalents in ordinary English lettering have been used.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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from the Church Missionary Society settlement at Groote Eylandt, and 90 miles from the nearest Methodist Mission at Elcho Island. Apart from the Mission stations of Roper River, Oenpelli, Goulburn Island, Milingimbi, Elcho Island, Yirrkalla and Groote Eylandt, which fringe the great Reserve, there is no other European settlement, except the new base subsidized by the Northern Territory Native Affairs Branch at Ambu Kambu on Groote Eylandt.

The whole region is rich in indigenous foods and resources, particularly along the coast. The sea abounds in dugong, turtle, fish, crayfish, shellfish, oysters, and crabs: inland, on the plains and in the jungles, there are wildfowl, emu, wallaby, kangaroo, and smaller animals, fruit, nuts, vegetables, berries, and a large variety of other bush foods, with quantities of fresh-water fish and crocodiles in the streams and rivers; and at times buffalo which have wandered eastwards from the Buffalo Plains west of Oenpelli. So plentiful is the food that, even in bad seasons, the quality may diminish, but rarely the quantity.

b Social Organization:

Before proceeding to our main study, it is necessary to outline briefly the structure of north-eastern Arnhem Land society. The work of Professor Lloyd Warner is the most reliable in this respect, while the Rev. T. T. Webb and Dr. Donald Thomson have written on the subject.[1] The reader will find sufficient detail in these for our present purpose. But it should be borne in mind that the organization of Yirrkalla society, although basically similar to that of Milingimbi, is in many respects decidedly different. Dr. Warner viewed aboriginal social life through the eyes of Milingimbi informants, influenced by cultural trends from Cape Stewart and the inland, while the present writer views the same position from the Yirrkalla point of view, uninfluenced to any marked degree from the west, but responding to contact from aboriginal groups to the south and south-west (this is particularly apparent in our study of the Kunapipi cult).

These people of eastern Arnhem Land, from Cape Stewart to Blue Mud Bay, had a general term for themselves—the Wulamba group of clans, forming a tribe with a more or less common cultural background: natives outside this region, such as those at Groote Eylandt, called them the "Balamumu" confederacy. Balamumu may be broadly translated as "those of the sea", that is, coastal people. The varying dialects (termed *mata*, "tongue") of these clans (*mala*)

1. L. Warner, *A Black Civilization*, New York and London, 1937; T. T. Webb, Tribal Organization in Eastern Arnhem Land, *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 406-411; A. P. Elkin, Marriage and Descent in East Arnhem Land, *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 412-416; D. Thomson, *Interim General Report of Preliminary Expedition to Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia*, 1935–36, Department of Interior, Canberra, 1936, pp. 31-34.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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CHAPTER VI

KUNAPIPI DREAMS

Kunapipi ritual and ideology, like all other aspects of native life and thought, find expression through the medium of dreams. The study of these requires not only personal acquaintance with the individuals whose dreams are recorded, but also sound knowledge of their cultural and traditional background. Their behaviour patterns must be compared with those of other representatives of the group; all social factors likely to contribute towards a particular dream should be analysed, and the individual's personality and psychological approach taken into consideration. In addition, the natives' own theory and interpretations of dreams must be considered.

For several months, at Yirrkalla, the dreams of a number of adult males were recorded daily. During the initial period of field-work, it was necessary to have approximately thirty male informants, each chosen for some specific reason; one was a headman of a certain linguistic group, another an artist, a wood-carver, a song-man, a leader of the Djanggawul or of the Kunapipi rituals, and so on. With such a group readily available it was convenient to record their dreams each morning while studying their social background. At the same time an intimacy grew up between the field-worker and the informants, so that mental reservations were reduced to a minimum. Detailed case-histories of each individual were compiled over the period of work, and the sequence of events within the social group was observed in relation to their dreams; these events were apparently modified or accentuated according to a man's peculiar background and associations. What had begun as a tentative experiment developed into an important aspect of study, which revealed the natives' psychological adjustment to their society under the impact of Misson and European contact. However, it was found necessary after a certain period to restrict the time spent on this work, since it had shown a tendency to dominate, and even in part to exclude, other aspects of equal if not greater importance.

It was however of great value to have this opportunity of studying hundreds of dreams, recorded in sequence, of a number of these aborigines, and to observe the wide range of subjects concerned, together with the themes which reflected each man's particular

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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159 the sexual act, while the covering of the *kanala* and the *jelmalandji*
787 signifies the complete insertion of the penis. This, of course, conforms
796 to what is believed to be the underlying intent of the Kunapipi
[83] ritual and the Wauwalak mythology; through fertilization by the penis (symbolized by the Snake), the Wauwalak (representing the Fertility Mother) becomes the source of fecundity for human, animal and other species.

The last phase of the dream refers to the final Kunapipi ceremony, in which the *djepalmandji* is used. This rite, signifying rebirth, is a normal outcome of the above ceremony; for from the symbolic act of coitus "someone or something will be born", and in the Kunapipi it is the initiates who emerge from their experience like new people.

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159 These three dreams serve to amplify our discussion of Kunapipi
787 ritual, and stress its inter-relationship with the basic Wauwalak
● 121 theme. Some new features are introduced, such as the re-interpretation of the *kanala* and *nanggaru*; but this does not fundamentally alter the conventional intent of Kunapipi ceremonies.

There is possibly a recognized pattern in Kunapipi dreams, over and above descriptive details of its rituals, which may be modified or exaggerated according to individual inclination or personal response. Definite patterns are found in dreams relating to other aspects of Wauwalak mythology or Djanggawul ritual, or to matters of alien contact. Much field work however has yet to be done in the realm of psychological reaction to indigenous (and introduced) religious phenomena.

[pp. 85-203 not processed]

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
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Foreword

part was presented by the most capable leaders and song men available for the particular territory concerned. This was the case also in recording the myth, which unfortunately cannot here be presented in its phonetic rendering. All features of the myth and songs were collectively discussed, and interpretations made by the Aborigines themselves.

A considerable amount of thought has gone into the question of presenting the available data on the Djanggawul. It has finally been decided to present as much as possible of the 'raw' material without, apart from interpretation and partial analysis, engaging in theoretical discussion, for material of this type obviously lends itself to such treatment. It is our contention that the rôle of the anthropologist in the Australian Aboriginal field should be one of recording data, and of presenting these in an accessible form, so that the maximum amount of material may be available for the consideration of students interested primarily in theory. That is not to say that we disparage that particular branch of anthropological science, but that we ourselves are more intimately concerned with Australian Aboriginal problems as such and, although taking into account the wider implication of our material, we must of necessity restrict our outlook to some extent. This, to us, is an important point, for we in Australia are acutely aware of the limitations of available anthropological data. Considering the geographical extent of the Australian continent, and the apparent diversity of Aboriginal cultural groups within it, we must admit that our knowledge of these societies is sparse. It is our duty, as we see it, to compensate in some degree for this deficiency. We do of course realize that, although our problems seem to us momentous, they diminish somewhat with distance, and when viewed in relation to the sum total of human experience throughout the world they become of much less pressing significance.

During the last two decades Australian Anthropology has received an impetus, principally through the personal efforts of Professors A. P. Elkin and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, and the Australian National Research Council has sent on to the field a series of anthropologists: this activity, and its results, have helped to counteract in some degree the errors of the past. Nevertheless, we in Australia are aware that although much has been done, there still remains more to do.

To say 'errors of the past' is not to disparage the monumental works of Sir Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, Carl Strehlow and others. What they lacked in anthropological method they made up in energy, and in their power to stimulate interest among anthropologists and others; they inspired, for instance, Emile Durkheim

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and Sir James Frazer, and their individual importance may not be underestimated.

It is our plan to present in one volume the substance of the Djanggawul cult; this includes the significance of the myth and ritual, the myth itself, the song cycle, and a partial analysis. A great deal rests on the cycle itself, which is essentially the core of the work; so we have deliberately chosen to give poetic renderings of the songs in English. The second volume is devoted entirely to the interlinear phonetic renderings,[1] with detailed notes attached; the reader is advised to read the English translations in conjunction with these, which of necessity include many additional references. This arrangement still leaves untreated a great deal of material relating to the Djanggawul. It is planned, therefore, to present at an early date the complete Milingimbi version of the song cycle, with analysis, for this differs in several major points from the Yirrkalla version presented here. The Yirrkalla song cycle as set out here contains 188 separate songs, and the Milingimbi cycle 264 songs.[2] There is also a mass of material relating to the rituals themselves, and to dreams. Here we are able to give only a brief sketch of the sequence of *dua nara* ritual, without treating it in detail. The dreams of various informants at Yirrkalla about

[1] In this volume native words are recorded (for publication purposes) in an anglicized version of our usual phonetic rendering, without using special symbols—whereas usually we follow the system recommended by the International Phonetic Association, with modifications and additions by Dr. A. Capell (*vide* 'Methods and Materials for Recording Australian Languages', *Oceania*, 1945, Vol. XVI, pp. 144–76).

There is a very real need for conformity of orthography in regard to Australian Aboriginal languages, and this can be achieved only by the use of standardized symbols. Thus *j* is generally used with its Continental value of *y*. The use of the *y* initially or within a word is too loose even in anglicized spelling, while *j* is a much more accurate rendering of the native sound.

It is hoped that future workers in Arnhem Land, or for that matter in other parts of Aboriginal Australia, will build on the orthographic foundations being laid to-day by anthropologists and linguists in Australia. It is partly on this account, the unwillingness of some field workers to conform, that Aboriginal terms and concepts are often hard to identify as between different authors. When reference is made to the work of Professor Lloyd Warner, *A Black Civilization*, and native words are quoted, his rendering is given alongside of ours. Recent anthropologists like T. G. H. Strehlow, *Aranda Traditions*, have also adhered to the use of the *j*.

[2] The Yirrkalla songs are on the whole longer than those from Milingimbi. The latter cycle continues the travels of the Djanggawul to Belbanara; this place is between the Blyth and Kupangu Creeks and the Liverpool River, inland from about the centre of Boucaut Bay, west of Milingimbi. A volume (entitled *Daughters of the Sun*) containing and discussing the Milingimbi version of the Djanggawul has now been prepared for publication.

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
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Foreword

121 128 Djanggawul ritual and interpretation bring a new perspective to bear on this phase of their life: dreams express individual attitudes towards the cult, and often show distortion of conventional ritual behaviour. In addition, there is the women's attitude towards the Djanggawul ideology, their ritual behaviour, the songs and stories they know, and their place in the general configuration.[1] Also available is a comparatively large series of stringy bark and brown paper drawings relating to the travels of the Djanggawul.

000 In conclusion, we must consider the question of whether or not the Arnhem Land Aborigines will themselves benefit from a study of this type. It is our belief that understanding of the fundamental issues involved in a religious cult like that of the Djanggawul will (or should) persuade administrators, missionaries and teachers to adopt a more tolerant attitude towards Aboriginal indigenous life. Through it they may glimpse the complexity of its organization and the simplicity of the basic theme: they will understand too the inter-relationship of Aboriginal life with the natural environment, the natives' dependence on the resources available to them, and their faith in the divine nature of the great Ancestral Beings. Through this medium they may, perhaps, come to know and appreciate something of the Aborigines' way of life.

There has been much discussion among anthropologists regarding the mingling of basic research results with applied anthropology.[2] We believe, however, that the anthropologist who over a period has worked with a particular group of people, who has learnt their language, has come to appreciate their way of life, has become in some degree absorbed (as far as this is possible for a stranger and a European) into the society, and has become interested in and emotionally attached to them, discovers sooner or later that he feels morally obliged to aid them in some practical way. Professor Herskovits has commented on this obligation: 'It is the nature of the case that the anthropologist is best fitted to see the strains and stresses of underprivileged groups, or of natives who no longer control their own lives. He sees these stresses and strains from the less pleasant, under-side of the situations in which they live. He sees the problems of the natives as no administrator, however gifted, can possibly see them. When, then he is in a position to aid in obtaining for the natives he knows some reinstatement of the human rights they have been deprived of, he customarily welcomes the opportunity . . .'[3] This is what the

[1] This latter section will be treated later in some detail by Catherine H. Berndt.

[2] *Vide* E. E. Evans-Pritchard, 'Applied Anthropology', *Africa*, 1946, Vol. XVI, pp. 92–8, and Melville J. Herskovits, *Man and his Works*, 1949, New York, pp. 650–5.

[3] M. J. Herskovits, *op. cit.*, p. 652.

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Chapter Twenty-five

EPILOGUE

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We are now in a position to summarize and discuss the contents of the Djanggawul epic, as described in the Yirrkalla version. To facilitate this, a chapter of detailed comments has been added to each part, or group of songs. These separate chapters have reviewed briefly the significance and symbolic intent of each song; they have indicated, too, the various threads running through all the parts, and their interrelated themes. We have thus already glimpsed the cycle as an integrated whole, and noted the fundamental elements which have emerged. It remains, now, for us to draw broad conclusions on this basis. Final conclusions must, however, rest on our analysis of the Milingimbi version of this same cycle. That version is complementary to the one reviewed here, and although its basic themes are similar, and its fundamental intent is the same, it does contain a number of additional features. These differences, insignificant as they may seem, must be taken into account in making our final summary of the Djanggawul cult in north-central and north-eastern Arnhem Land.

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533

Reading through the mythology and songs of the Djanggawul cult, we can perhaps begin to appreciate something of the care and thought which have gone into their construction, in the form in which we see them to-day. Through them it is possible for aliens such as ourselves to understand in some degree the fundamental issues involved in one Aboriginal religious cult. Moreover, it is only through the medium of such material, particularly in the form of interlinear translations, that we may attain more than a superficial understanding of Aboriginal thought and behaviour. These

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
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FOREWORD

This book was planned to throw additional light on a little-known country – Arnhem Land, in the north-eastern corner of the Northern Territory of Australia. 121

We are concerned principally with the Aboriginal inhabitants of the coastal areas, and with the different forms of alien contact to which they have been subjected from the past up to the present day. Our intention has been to place in perspective the historical sequence of conditions in this region, relating these to the life and thought of the indigenous population.

We see the world of the Arnhem Landers gradually widening through the years, from the period when the coast was visited by what we now term Ancestral and Spirit Beings to the time of the pre-Macassans, followed by the Indonesians, Europeans and Japanese. It is a panoramic conception; for no other Aboriginal group in Australia has been subjected to such varied, and at times intensive, cultural impact as have these Arnhem Landers. The most remarkable result has been their ability to maintain throughout this intercourse so much of their cultural and moral integrity.

The greater part of this book has been compiled from data obtained during our own anthropological field research in Arnhem Land; these were supplemented by documentary material from official and unofficial European sources. Thus we may see the point of view of the Aborigines on the one hand, and of the alien "intruders" on the other. 127

We have purposely not included a detailed account of the indigenous native society and culture, because to do this satisfactorily would involve a far more elaborate discussion than is possible here. The reader particularly interested in this aspect will find a brief description of the cultural background, and something of the traditional life of the Arnhem Landers, in Chapter 2: 121

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121 here the main purpose has been to create a basis for our study. Many other aspects, too, need more detailed treatment – for example, the period of pre-Macassan to Macassan contact (see Chapters 5 to 10), Europeans on the north coast (Chapter 11), and conditions during the present day (Chapters 17 to 18). Nor have we attempted to discuss native policy in general, in relation to Arnhem Land and its people. This is a book about the Arnhem Land coast, its natives, and its contact through the centuries with peoples of differing cultures. We see the Arnhem Landers' adjustment to the first waves of Indonesian association, and their consequent "unsettlement" when this form of contact was upset by the infiltration of other groups: conditions altered rapidly, and the Aborigines found themselves unable to grapple successfully with their changing circumstances.

Within this picture are a multitude of experiences expressed in a variety of ways – the Aborigines' association with Indonesian traders, their journeys to the East India Archipelago, their intercourse with Torres Strait Islanders, Japanese, and Europeans, and their constant endeavour to maintain their cultural independence and to defend their territory against the inroads of these visitors. It was this which led to the spearings and "massacres" described in the main body of this book, activities which today we would term a form of guerilla warfare. The whole history of a people's contact with the outside world over many centuries is condensed into a few Chapters of this book: and though some of their experiences may seem to us bizarre and exotic, to the Aborigines of Arnhem Land they were, even if at times unexpected, part of the tapestry of everyday life.

Much of the material in this book was obtained during our anthropological research work in western, north-eastern and eastern Arnhem Land between the years 1946-47 and 1949-50. This followed previous research in other parts of the Northern Territory in 1944-46, which in turn was a continuation of a study made in north-western, middle-north and southern South Aus-
122 tralia in 1939-44. The greater part of this work was carried out under the auspices of the Australian National Research Council in conjunction with the Department of Anthropology, Sydney

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND

Arnhem Land, through the centuries, has attracted to its shores a variety of both Asiatic and European voyagers, some interested in exploration for its own sake, and some for economic or commercial reasons. Between the middle of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, this northern part of Australia became known to the Western World through the discoveries of the Dutch and Portuguese.[1] Considerably earlier, however, the coastal regions of Arnhem Land had been visited regularly by Indonesian traders. The date of their first arrival has not been definitely established: but we can make tentative suggestions, based on the traditional records which the Arnhem Land natives have handed down from one generation to another.

In addition to this fairly intensive contact over a long period, Arnhem Land became comparatively well-known during the last phase of Malay-Macassan association with our north coast, and during the exploration of certain English voyagers just before and during the establishment of European settlements.

Later on came the attempted European settlement of this part of the Northern Territory, and the exploitation of its waters for marine products. Japanese and other Asiatics, as well as Europeans, took part in pearling operations; and Christian Mission stations were gradually established at various places all round the Arnhem Land coast. Today only the Missions remain. The whole vast region of Arnhem Land, some 31,200 square miles, is now an Aboriginal Reserve.

In this study of Arnhem Land, we shall see how events fall into their proper historical perspective, from the earliest known

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[2] period to the present day. We shall follow the contact of the Aborigines with alien peoples, review the repercussions, and notice something of the effects upon their traditional culture.

[3] The Arnhem Land Reserve, one of the largest in Australia, stretches east and south-east of Darwin in the Northern Territory, across to the western shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria.

[3] The mangrove-lined coast on the north faces the Arafura Sea, [3] separating Australia from the densely populated islands of Indo-[3] nesia and New Guinea; and adjacent to it, running from west to east, are the islands of Croker, Goulburn, Wessel and Bremer (once Melville). Into the sea here and there flow large rivers, which further inland are usually banked by thick jungles of cypress, gum, stringy-bark, wild fig, bamboo, cycad, screw-palm (pandanus), and many other trees and bushes known only to the [13] botanist and native. And tidal salt-water creeks flow among the mangroves, the home of sea-birds, crocodiles and sharks.

[3] On the east the same almost monotonous coast-line fronts the Gulf of Carpentaria, dotted with such islands as Woodah and Bickerton, Winchelsea and Connexion, close to Groote Eylandt.

This great Reserve is bordered on the south by the Roper River; and on the west a natural boundary of rocky hills and sandstone halts the encroaches of the buffalo hunter, who has established himself on the fertile plains and swamps around the Adelaide, Mary and Alligator rivers. In the heart of Arnhem Land, gorges, mountains, swamps and rocky plains spread through country still partially unexplored.

[19] Scattered through the Reserve are Mission settlements controlled by the Church Missionary Society and the Methodist Overseas Mission—Oenpelli, Croker Island (a "Half-Caste" settlement), South Goulburn Island, the Crocodile Islands (Milingimbi), Elcho Island, Yirrkalla, Groote Eylandt, and Roper River. To the south-west, Beswick Government Cattle Station and Maranboy Reserve can barely be said to be in Arnhem Land properly. Near the western border of Arnhem Land, in the so-called "Buffalo country", are two unoccupied Aboriginal Reserves, the Manasi and Woolwonga; and on the south, the attraction of neighbouring cattle stations (such as Mainoru and Roper Valley) has contributed to the decline of the local population.

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BACKGROUND

Once the term "Arnhem Land" was applied to the whole region east of Daly River, including the area about Darwin and Katherine, Melville and Bathurst Islands, and the "Buffalo country";[2] but since the Aboriginal Reserve was established, the name has been restricted to this. 131

All through this region, except in parts of the interior, there is no scarcity of food. In the rivers are fresh-water fish, goannas and crocodiles, in the sea and coastal bays many varieties of fish, shell-fish, turtle, dugong and (rarely) whales. At certain seasons the swamps and rivers, streams, waterholes and jungles, teem with wild fowl; eggs are plentiful, and (according to the time of the year) there is a choice of duck, goose, tern (or sea-gull), crocodile, turtle, emu and jungle fowl. Inland and along the coast there is an abundance of meat — kangaroo, wallaby, opossum, bandicoot, porcupine and edible reptiles. Moreover there are introduced water-buffalo, which abound in western Arnhem Land, and are seen today as far east as Yirrkalla, near Cape Arnhem. 136 262

Wild honey, fruits, berries, seeds, nuts and vegetable foods such as yam and lily roots and green lily stems, are available in season. And at the tail end of the monsoonal period the sea brings to this coast, particularly on the north-east, large supplies of drifting coconut and other edible nuts. 137 262

This, then, is roughly the position of the Arnhem Land Reserve, and it is upon the natural products of this country that the Aboriginal inhabitants have in the past primarily depended. Today, however, the Aborigine does not rely solely on his environment for subsistence. Long years of alien contact have developed in him a desire for introduced goods, a desire which was fulfilled to some extent when the Mission stations were established. 171

In order to examine the picture more closely, and to see the events presented in some historical sequence, we shall concentrate on the northern and eastern coast of Arnhem Land, and the adjacent islands within the Reserve. This coast-line and these islands experienced alien contact much earlier than did the inland boundaries, along the Roper River and the "Buffalo" plains. The actual interior of the Reserve, except for the bush country towards the Rose River in the south-east, the Arafura and Milin- 21 [177]

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gimbi in the north, and the Liverpool River country behind Oenpelli in the west and south-west, seems to be virtually uninhabited.

Although Arnhem Land covers a large area, its population has been assessed at only about four thousand. This includes Aborigines on Mission stations, where tentative census figures are available, while in regions away from direct supervision only approximate estimates have been made. There are only three large un-contacted areas in the whole of Arnhem Land: about the Liverpool and King rivers, and the mainland south of Milingimbi; the neighbourhood of Rose River; and the hills in the south-western corner of Arnhem Land. However, it is only in the first two places that Aborigines are to be found in any numbers, and both together probably contain no more than about a thousand people. These Liverpool groups have been gradually displaced, within recent years, by the westward pressure of people from Cape Stewart and the south of Milingimbi, and many of them forced to fluctuate between Goulburn Islands, Oenpelli and the Buffalo camps. They would number today no more than approximately four hundred.

. . . . .

This area, from Rose River in the south to Goulburn Island and Oenpelli in the west, has been mentioned in early literature, particularly by such travellers as Sir Mathew Flinders and Phillip King;[8] and in recent years various authors such as Ion Idriess,[4] Charles Barrett,[5] W. E. Harney,[6] Alan Marshall,[7] Carl Warburton,[8] Ernestine Hill,[9] Colin Simpson[10] and Clyde Fenton[11] have tended to over-glamorise Arnhem Land and its people.

The most important and detailed information concerning the historical and geographical background of Arnhem Land is not generally accessible,[12] although Alfred Searcy[13] provides some valuable notes and reminiscences. But despite some interesting references to the contact of Europeans with natives, these books and notes concern themselves very little with the local people and their lives.

Missionaries too have helped to add to the existing documentary evidence.[14] Professor Lloyd Warner[15] carried out social

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
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1.

INTRODUCTION

The work of Malinowski[1], Firth[2] and others has done much to dispel the idea which was long prevalent that most native people live in a kind of idyllic "pre-economic" state. Many years ago Malinowski showed that a well-developed economic structure underlies the activities of the people of the Trobriand Islands. He showed that these people possess appropriate ideas of wealth and definite mechanisms for its distribution, as well as a system for the organisation of work and of communal enterprise, including extended trading voyages with the ceremonial background of the *kula*.

But the Trobriand Islanders are relatively advanced people compared with the Australian aborigines. No systematic account has yet been published of the economic life and structure of the aborigines, of their ownership of property, their economic exchange[3] or of their ideas of wealth and payment. Nor has any comprehensive account appeared of their systems of land tenure, the development of craft

[1] Malinowski, B., *Primitive Economics of the Trobriand Islanders*, The Economic Journal, Vol. XXXI, pp. 1-16.

[2] Firth, Raymond, *Primitive Economics of the New Zealand Maori*, London, 1929.

[3] An interesting type of economic exchange on the Daly River, to the west of Darwin, has been described by Dr. W. E. H. Stanner,

specialisation, of the organisation of work or of the "drives" which furnish the motives for the carrying out of work, and especially for the extensive communal enterprises which are a feature of aboriginal life.

It is well known that the aborigines are nomadic, and that they are hunters and collectors, not producers, of food. But is the search for vegetable food, the fishing and hunting, carried out by each individual independently, or by each family as a separate unit, or is there any general organisation of work, co-ordination of enterprise and orderly sharing of proceeds? If there is such organisation, how and by whom is this carried out and by what means are these things regulated? That there is *some* communal effort is at once obvious even to a casual observer. But what is the nature of the drives behind this effort? Are these social or economic?

A close study of the literature on the aborigines gives no really satisfactory answers to these questions. Instead, it has been assumed generally by economists that these people still linger in the hypothetical "pre-economic" stage of development to which I have referred, or even that they live in a state of "primitive communism". By this is implied, appar-

(Oceania, Vol. IV, 1933-4), which suggests that ceremonial exchange cycles may have been widespread in Australia and that they have been overlooked by field workers.

This belief is supported by the following note, for which I am indebted to Professor A. R. Radcliffe-Brown: "Cycles of ceremonial exchange existed, I believe, all over Australia. In West Australia the tribes on the Ninety Mile Beach (Karadjeri etc.) acted as middle-man through whom things made in the Kimberley district passed to southern tribes such as the Kariera, and vice-versa. Moreover the Karadjeri were manufacturers of certain distinctive types of weapons etc. and had a distinctive art-style of their own. These Karadjeri manufactures went both northwards and southwards along the coast."

602 more than a mere term of address, and carries with it a
431 definite pattern of behaviour. It is well known that the giv-
602 ing or exchange of presents establishes or affirms a bond between individuals. When an aborigine meets a relation of a certain order, for example a person to whom, under the classificatory system, he extends the term brother, he may have an obligation to make a present to him. If it happens that his only available wealth is a shirt or a pair of trousers he will hand these over to discharge his obligation, receiving a gift in return, which may chance to be a ragged shirt or a tattered, worn-out pair of trousers. The important point is that a gift has been exchanged and reciprocal obligations discharged. If one man should happen to be the loser, in the economic sense, this is of little moment. The transaction is in no sense barter or exchange; it is a gift pure and simple, without any assessment of value, and with no deliberate *economic* import, in response to a *social* obligation laid down by the kinship structure into which every man is born. One of the men has given a present to the other. Failure to reciprocate would lay the recipient open to a charge of meanness, and what is even worse, he would lose face, and would in any case remain under an obligation to repay the gift at some future date.

● 121 The purpose of the present communication is to give an
177 account of the basic economic structure and organisation
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[601] modification of the pattern applied to their own actual fathers and
[602] mothers.

The kinship organisation provides also for the old and the sick, who are fed and cared for, not as a charge on the society, but by their own kin, who accept the responsibility without question as part of the pattern of life in which they have grown up. Cruelty or neglect of old people and children is unknown among the people of Arnhem Land.

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
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of the natives of North-eastern Arnhem Land, and to show how the impact upon these primitive hunting people of a virile culture from Indonesia, which has probably occurred only during the past two hundred years, has stimulated a remarkable ceremonial exchange cycle so that goods were passed far inland from the coast, while others were drawn from places hundreds of miles to the southward. This cycle, though in itself primarily social and not economic, supplies the motive force, the "drive", under cover of which an elaborate system of *ceremonial exchange* has been developed. This in turn furnishes the mechanism for the circulation of wealth or *gerri* (applied collectively to "goods" or "possessions", to material wealth), that would have been restricted, or at least rendered difficult, by the social structure of these people without the influence of the culture from Indonesia.[5]

[5] The fact that ceremonial exchange systems appear to have been widespread in Australia has been pointed out (see page 2). But the special type of local organisation which occurred in Arnhem Land, combined with the war-like reputation enjoyed by these people, would have tended to restrict communication. A remarkable feature of the social organisation of Arnhem Land north of a line from Bennet Bay and east of Cape Stewart, is the absence of any tribal organisation. The absence of tribal organisation to provide a basis for a wider solidarity, such as exists in neighbouring territories, has tended, as is shown on pages 9 to 13, to foster an intense internal solidarity within the clan, and within the larger group which consists of an aggregation of clans, called *mälla*; and thus to intensify the opposition with other groups. The effect of this social organisation, which was probably unstable, seems to be reflected in the intense and bitter rivalry and almost constant fighting, which raged among the hordes in far Eastern Arnhem Land, and which was responsible for many deaths. These are not conditions which encourage free intercourse and communication between groups widely separated, and although an extensive ceremonial exchange system undoubtedly existed long before visitors from the

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943) 1949
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[121] 177 Before discussing the effect of the ceremonial exchange cycle which was greatly stimulated by the impact of this dynamic force—the infiltration of Indonesian culture—upon the relatively simple culture pattern of these people, I shall describe in outline the typical culture of this area. It can be shown that in their own culture pattern, before the impact of Malay or proto-Malay culture, the natives of Arnhem Land already possessed the essential elements of a simple economic structure, with recognition of "value" and "wealth", the beginnings of the development of craft specialisation, mechanisms for the organisation of work and the carrying out of communal enterprises, and very definite ideas about the division of labour.

174 It is not possible to state with certainty when the first contact with the Indonesian visitors commenced, but in 1803 Matthew Flinders[6] learned from the crews of Malay praus whom he met on the north coast, that sixty praus, with a total of 1000 men, all from the Gulf of Boni in the Celebes, were on the coast of Arnhem Land at one time and were engaged in fishing for trepang. Although some of these people informed Flinders that they had visited the coast for the first time only twenty years before, and that they were then among the first of their people to do so,

177 431 619 721 Celebes came to Arnhem Land, it is probable that the *gerri* introduced by these visitors did much to overcome the effects of the segmentary organisation and to infuse life and vitality into the ceremonial exchange cycle which developed on a large scale in this territory. One of the aims of this paper is to show how the impact of this virile Indonesian culture may have overcome the effects of the intensely *segmentary* organisation. This effect of the ceremonial exchange cycle on social organisation is discussed in detail at a later stage in this paper.

[6] Matthew Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, Vol. 2, 1814, pp. 228-233.

horde rests on no such solid foundation and is unstable. 614 621

Membership of each group within this complex segmentary organisation carries its own (often conflicting) solidarity and obligations, which however, form an integral scheme. Obligation and counter-obligation, defined by membership of the clan, and especially by kinship, supplies the incentive to work, to produce wealth and *gerri*, (page 5). Kinship also provides the chief basis for the division of the proceeds of communal enterprise. 602

Before discussing the economic structure in detail, it is necessary to look at the environment, the background, in which the aborigine lives. We must examine the natural resources which are available to him both for the gathering of food and for the manufacture of weapons, implements and utensils, as well as for the building of houses and watercraft. It is necessary to study the methods he has developed for the exploitation of these resources, for the collecting of raw material, for the manufacture of food and the utensils necessary in his domestic economy and activities. It is necessary, also, to examine any mechanisms which he may have developed for the distribution of these goods between individuals within a group, or between groups, and again, in a wider field, to trace the beginning of any system of barter or trade in manufactured objects or commodities, with groups in distant areas. 121

Does such exchange or trade exist? Is it a regular, (organised) matter or merely casual and sporadic? How is it carried out, and what is the motive force, the incentive, which is required to overcome the difficulties inherent in the "segmentary organisation" which would tend to prevent any extensive form of intercourse between widely separated groups? We have seen already that the segmentary organisation, which divides the people into small groups, each with an intense internal solidarity, also furnishes a basis for 571 619

114 ture of the natives of North-eastern Arnhem Land showed
177 a resistance to the influence of this virile culture from Indonesia, and certainly none for the statement that the ideas of these people were "no different from what they were before he (the Malay seafarer) arrived . . ."

121 I do not propose here to attempt a full review of the in-
177 fluence of the Indonesian culture on the ceremonial life of these people, but merely to show its effect on the ceremonial exchange cycle and the economic system which accompanies it.

177 That this influence was extensive is proved beyond ques-
192 tion by the fact (see pp. 67, 68f) that the term *muadäk*,
431 which gives its name to *kumur muadäk*, the northern sec-
439 tor of the exchange cycle, is the collective or generic name given by the natives to all the *gerri* which they obtained formerly from the Macassar visitors, of which the chief items are knives, axes of the type called *luŋa linya*, nails (for fish hooks etc.), fish hooks and lines, bottle glass (for scrapers), tobacco, smoking pipes (*pämatukka*), belts, wooden dugout canoes, (*lippa lippa*), beads, (*männi-männi*), and material such as calico, blankets, string and later, wool, to which the collective term *mäthäkäl* was applied.

114 When Professor Warner contrasts the ease with which an
324 Arnhem Land native acquired an iron axe from the Malays,
135 with the labour involved in the making of the (admittedly)
431 much less efficient and satisfactory stone axe, he overlooks
463 certain important factors. First, that stone axes, like flint spear heads, are made from special stone which occurs only in restricted areas, and that while any man who merely uses an axe to get wild honey, can grind the edge, the implement itself is usually made initially by a craftsman, a specialist in the working of the stone who lives in the country in which it occurs, and like the smooth hard

10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
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APPENDIX IX

MAHKAROLLA AND MURNGIN SOCIETY

121 This section, too fragmentarily and too briefly, tells the story of Mahkarolla, a Murngin who was my friend. Although we had not seen each other for almost twenty years, we continued being intimate and close friends until his recent death. He was a member of a "stone age tribe" and I have lived most of my life in modern industrial America, yet during his life our friendship was as strong and enduring as any I have experienced with my own people. I think I knew him as well as I have ever known anyone. Most of this chapter will be in his own words; the part told by me relates incidents in our relationship which I believe reveal his mature wisdom, moral strength, and his fine qualities as a human being. Throughout the book I have striven for objective reporting and detached scientific analysis; although Mahkarolla's autobiographical sections in this chapter do conform to these criteria and the evidence was collected accordingly, I hope the last section about him will express what I felt him to be as a splendid human being, as well as express my love, respect, and admiration for him. Perhaps in any true account of a lasting friendship this is the ultimate objectivity.

The previous chapters present the Murngin world as a social system and as a symbolic order, while "Social Change in North Australia" (Appendix I) attempts to reconstruct something of the past of Murngin life, particularly the relations of the Murngins with the Macassar people. The purpose of this chapter is different: it is designed to let the reader meet a Murngin individual and *feel* what he is like as a human being. This chapter can render no claim to being an autobiography or a personality analysis. Rather it is an incomplete account of a man's life and his feelings about himself and his world assembled from field notes which were collected to understand not Mahkarolla but his society.

128 Throughout the text of this chapter the social references and social significance of his remarks have been indicated by placing page references to the text of the book in parentheses. For example, when he speaks of his experiences in the circumcision ceremony the pages in parentheses refer to age grading parts of the Djungguan ceremony and other appropriate social and collective behavior. Mahkarolla tells part of what he *thinks* he

10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
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623 clearly seen that those not represented at the conference were the real insti-
628 gators of the war and that their actions were without tribal sanction.

[202] One old man then suggested sending a messenger with a message stick to the bushmen, who were not represented, to tell them that there would be a great makarata or peace-making ceremony (pages 174-176). Someone replied that this was foolishness for makaratas had been tried and they had failed because the enemies violated the rules. Instead of bringing peace the makaratas had only brought more trouble and greater conflict. Discussion of this point finally brought victory to the one who opposed the makaratas because the antagonism of the coastal people against the inland clans was still very strong and they wanted vengeance as well as peace.

What, then, could be done to stop the fighting? The situation was desperate; drastic efforts must be made. One of the older men said, "Let us stop all war. This killing of our young men is no good. It is better that we have ceremonies all the time and never have war. Let us have a gaingar."

Everyone agreed he was right. The speaker continued, "We will have a spear fight to end all spear fights."

A gaingar is the most deadly form of Murngin warfare. Later I learned that 17 men had been killed in one gaingar. In proportion to the population this meant a higher mortality rate than in all of the battles of World War I. This old man was proposing that today's young men be sacrificed so that the young men of tomorrow could be saved.

I was asked what I thought of the idea. I did not respond for it was too much. I sat there, among a council of the wisest men of a Stone Age culture. In one sense several millenniums separated their civilization from mine. Yet I had been a soldier in a war in which our leaders and those of our allies had said, "This is a war to end all wars," and had sent millions of young men to die with this rallying cry.

The discussion continued. Most of the group were enthusiastically in favor of the gaingar. The minority, Mahkarolla among them, grudgingly agreed.

When the meeting disbanded Mahkarolla and I walked back to my camp. "When I was a boy I saw a spear fight to end all spear fights," he said. "Many men were killed. It was no good. We must not have it. My people did not stop fighting. As you see, we are fighting today just as we did before. Spear fights do not end spear fights."

159 One day Mahkarolla and I started on an expedition with two canoeloads
502 of Murngin men, I to map clan territories, he to visit the sacred pools where
[121 his totems lived. As we sailed in the dugout around the rocky cliffs of
184 Point Napier, across the channel from the English Company Islands, we
778]

magical rites and spells, it does not involve the co-operation of spirit familiars.

The majority of informants stated that the cult of the *marngit* is not a hereditary one, and they asserted that although the son of a *marngitmirri* father may also be *marngitmirri*, membership of the cult does not necessarily pass from father to son. But at least one informant of Wanguri clan, a clan of Mindjikai *barpuro*, declared that in his own clan, of which the principal territory is at Arnhem Bay, a little to the south and east of Elcho Island, the cult of the *marngit* was hereditary and did pass from father to son. On controversial issues of this kind, long discussions often took place among the old men who acted as informants, and finally they would reach agreement and give me their verdict. Far from being careless or merely anxious to please, they took great pains to check information by referring to people who possessed specialized knowledge, and took much trouble in settling any doubtful point. My informants declared that the *marngit* was also hereditary in the Burara tribe, where, however, the cult of the *ragalk* was also established and was certainly dominant. Some conflict, or difference of opinion, does occur in matters of this kind particularly in north-eastern Arnhem Land where there is no hard and fast, or orthodox, view, supported by a large body of opinion.

This means that, as might be expected, in the absence of a written language or an organized body to formalize belief, there is necessarily some degree of flexibility, some scope for individual ideas, and within the atypical, intensely segmentary, social organization of eastern Arnhem Land, this variability tends to be emphasized. Even in matters of kinship, which concerns the entire group, since it regulates all behaviour, differences sometimes occurred and the people would call in old men and submit an intricate or knotty problem to them in the way that I have mentioned above.

It was intended originally to confine this paper to a short account of the *marngitmirri*, translated from the statements of the medicinemen themselves, and to follow this with descriptions of the *marngit*, which are shown in the accompanying plates of actual drawings of their spirit familiars made by these medicinemen. But my attention has been drawn to an article by the late Revd. T. T. Webb published some years ago, 'The Making of a Marngit,'[2] which contains some errors and misconceptions, and I have therefore extended the scope of this article to discuss the relationship of the medicineman and sorcerer in Arnhem Land and the roles and the distribution of these cults.

In the opening paragraph of this article Mr. Webb says: 'In east Arnhem Land there are two classes of magicians

[p.97(c)]

756 or medicine-men. Members of the one, whose operations
754 are wholly of an evil character, are known as *ragalk*, while members of the other, whose operations are always of a benign character, are known as *marrngit*, or less frequently *gulang*.'

This statement needs qualification, for the cults of the medicineman or *marrngit* and the sorcerer or *kalka* in Arnhem Land are not quite as simple as suggested in this account, and the *marrngitmirri*—that is, the medicineman, the man who has been initiated and adopted by spirit familiars called *marrngit* who help him in the practice of his cult—really belongs to east Arnhem Land, and to the territory east of the Crocodile Islands, coinciding with the area that lacks a typical tribal organization. The somewhat different cult of the *ragalk* or *kalka*, the sorcerer, flourishes at Cape Stewart and to the south and west of this territory. Its stronghold is central and western Arnhem Land. Here, in the territory of the Burara tribe of Cape Stewart which lies immediately west of the Crocodile Group, and among Raimbar'ngo, Ritar'ngo and other tribes of central Arnhem Land, the cult of the *ragalk* flourishes. An informant of Wanguri clan who was linked by his totemic background with the Wallamango declared that the cult of the *marrngit* did occur in the neighbouring Burara tribe. But the account given by this man was not impartial and unavoidably gave to the *marrngit* of that area a kind of 'aura' of the *kalka* or sorcerer.

It will be clear from what I have said that the two cults are not complementary, except possibly in the Burara tribe. And in east Arnhem Land they certainly do not exist side by side as opposing cults among the same people, as the Revd. T. T. Webb's account implies. The sorcerer or *kalka*, although certainly known to the people east of the Crocodile Islands who live in the stronghold of the *marrngitmirri*, and much feared by them as part of the magical stock-in-trade of the *warnba*, the people of the west (strangers) does not exist as a cult in eastern Arnhem Land. The fear in which the sorcerer is held by these people
[797 resulted from the transfer of the Methodist Mission from
152] Elcho Island, where it was first established, to Milingimbi in the Crocodile Islands—which, by coincidence, lies on the western fringe of the territory of the Burara, the very home of the *kalk*'.

756 The present paper is intended to give an account of the
● 121 *marrngitmirri* and their *marrngit* and particularly to describe the way in which a man of east Arnhem Land is visited by
[787] his *marrngit* and initiated as a 'medicineman,' the relationship that exists between the *marrngitmirri* and his *marrngit* or spirit familiars, and the way in which his *marrngit* or spirit familiars test the medicineman before they adopt him.

The coloured plates (I, J) that accompany the paper, as I have stated, represent the *marrngit* drawn by three medicinemen of east Arnhem Land. The descriptions with the plates are translations of the information given to me by the medicinemen themselves, generally in their own languages.

The Kalka *and* Ragalk

754 After I had been working for about two years in eastern Arnhem Land and knew the language well enough to

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OII7 Murngin OII7

648 Age men. Very little was known of Arnhem Land and there was a great deal of guessing. Charts were coastline sketches plotted by Matthew Flinders in the stormy season in 1803, when to overcome the tossing of his small boat, he ordered his sailors to lash him high on the mast with his box of instruments by his side. In the medley of suggestions made for the subjugation of east Arnhem Land the Commonwealth Government accepted the offer of the Methodist Missionary Society to establish a mission station in the area, and it was my good fortune to be accepted to commence the new work.

[1197]

121 I had a personal interest in these people, for nomads and their ways had teased my fancy from infancy. Both my mother's and father's families were among the pioneers in the Hawkesbury Valley in New South Wales, where they erected their slab huts and grew their maize. Life was hard for the pioneer, but it was also interesting, with its floods, fires, isolation, and Stone Age men. One died from spear wounds, several had hairbreadth escapes, and stories of their adventures retold among the scenes of the events made a happy background for a growing boy. In one region, a crumbling stone fire-place was all that remained of a stone-and-slab homestead where a fatal attack had been made: on another hillside a partly buried hearthstone showed where a settler's wife had defended herself from an enraged warrior with boiling water from her cooking-pots. As a child, my happiest adventures were in caves blackened by ancient camp-fires and bearing the imprint of aboriginal hands, or amongst rounded sandstone pillars in a totem-centre, or beside flat rocks and caves scored by Stone Age artists.

122 114 In May 1934 my wife and I landed in Darwin. Five hundred miles of trackless bush and the Arafura Sea lay between us and the Gulf of Carpentaria, and the only means of transport was a lugger. A lugger sounded very glamorous;